

Elliot was a child with a lot of energy.



Perhaps too much energy.



Like, "oh my goodness, we're exhausted, and we don't want you to break anything, please stop running around" energy.

One day in early elementary school, a boy named Tony tried to push Elliot around.



Elliot, however, interpreted this, and the resulting fight, as play.



At first baffled, Tony eventually decided physical challenges with Elliot were fun, and roughhousing after that really was friendly.



Elliot's parents were quick to warn Elliot that someone could get hurt, and that most people didn't want to "play" that way.



Some time later, however, Elliot noticed Tony was pushing around people who didn't want to play.



But Elliot knew he and Tony were just having fun. He didn't see the big deal.

Tony said the other kids were laughing at them. They said Elliot and Tony were boyfriends, and that they liked to kiss when they wrestled.

Elliot didn't get why that was bad, or how that made it okay to push them.

Tony didn't want to play after that. He was quick to anger, and pushed anyone that got on his nerves.

Elliot wanted Tony to stop, but Tony was the first friend he'd ever had after Sarah. He didn't know what to do.



Then Elliot saw Tony shove a girl.



When Elliot hit Tony, it was not playful.



He also called Tony a bad word, which got him a detention.

Any chance of Tony and Elliot making up were clobbered on that day.



Instead, Tedd and Elliot slowly became friends, and Tedd eventually told Elliot he was a boy.

After seriously punching Tony, Elliot became "that scary kid who fights bullies".

The bully of bullies.



Any violent bully he saw would have to answer to him.

Eventually, Elliot had no doubts about winning. Bullies had no chance against him.

He had all the power.



When he saw violent bullies, it enraged him.

By the time he attacked, however...

...he was smiling.



Elliot had never been very introspective. He thought something was right to do, and he did it.

He even used martial arts training to keep from doing too much harm to the bullies.

He was clearly the good guy.

THAT GUY'S SCARY

YEAH

One day, however, Elliot was just thinking about fighting bullies, and he saw the face he made.

He saw a bad guy.



Elliot was more reserved after that. He tried to do only the minimum necessary to get bullies to back off, most often just intimidating them.

This did not mean Elliot didn't want to take it further. Bullies angered him greatly, and he liked the thought of making them feel weak.



Knowing this about himself is why Elliot didn't like getting introspective.

He felt he had an important reason to do so, however, after learning there might be a way to power up Cheerleadra during an emergency.



# Balance, Part 5

Thursday



YOU WERE GOING TO HAVE A MEETING WITH THOSE GRIFFINS ABOUT THE MAGIC BUILDUP THAT AFFECTS BOTH VERSIONS OF OUR WORLD...

AND YOU WEREN'T GOING TO INVITE ME?!

DOES HE JUST FEEL LEFT OUT?!

AS IT HAPPENS, I DO HAVE NEW INFORMATION REGARDING THE BUILDUP OF MAGIC ENERGY IN MOPERVILLE, AND THE CLOG THAT'S CAUSING IT.



ARE YOU KIDDING? MY SUPER HERO SPELL'S NERFED, AND I'VE SEEN GRIFFINS INTIMIDATE AN IMMORTAL, AND TAKE DOWN A SPIDER-VAMPIRE MAN!

YOU GOT ANYONE ELSE WHO'S EXTRA STRONG AND DIPLOMATIC WE CAN BRING WITH US???



YOU... DID LEAVE ON  
GOOD TERMS WITH  
THE GRIFFINS, YES?

YEAH,  
IT'S JUST,  
Y'KNOW...

HOPE FOR THE  
BEST, PLAN FOR  
THE WORST?

GOOD.

WE'RE  
ON THE  
SAME  
PAGE.

AND THE WORST IN THIS  
SITUATION IS ANGRY, SUPER-  
POWERED CAT-BIRDS?

AS FOR ADDITIONAL HELP... I  
CAN THINK OF ONE AGENT WHO'S  
LIKELY AVAILABLE, AND, ON PAPER,  
IS ONE OF OUR BEST, BUT...

Dramatization of back  
when Arthur first retired,  
and Edward got his job.

BISHOP...

YOU'RE NOT MY  
**REAL SURROGATE**  
FATHER FIGURE!

WE DO NOT GET ALONG WELL.

IT'S HIGHLY PROBABLE BOTH OF US  
BEING THERE WOULD BE... COUNTER-  
PRODUCTIVE TO DIPLOMACY.

YOU SAID THE  
GRIFFINS SAW  
NANASE AS ROYALTY  
BECAUSE OF HER  
MAGIC POWER  
POTENTIAL?

HAVING A LOT  
OF MAGIC POWER  
MAKES THEM  
THINK YOU'RE  
ROYALTY, YEAH.

I WONDER IF  
THEY'LL SEE ME  
THAT WAY... HAVING  
SOMEONE THEY SEE  
AS "ROYAL" WITH US  
COULD BE GOOD.

WE KNOW FOR A  
FACT THAT NANASE—

NO.

NOT BEHIND  
HER PARENTS  
BACK.

AND PREFERABLY NOT  
EVEN IF THEY KNEW.

I SHOULD GO.

NO, GRACE.  
I DON'T WANT  
ANY OF YOU  
KIDS GOING.



I'M  
NOT A  
KID.

YOU'RE ALL BABIES. THE ONLY REASONS  
I'M NOT OBJECTING TO ELLIOT GOING IS HE'S  
THE ONE THE GRIFFINS ARE EXPECTING...

...WE'RE GOING TO OPTIMIZE THE HELL OUT OF  
HIS CHEERLEADERA FORM FOR RUNNING AWAY...

WE ARE?

...AND HE'S  
TOLD HIS  
PARENTS  
ABOUT IT!

YOU  
HAVE  
TOLD  
YOUR  
PARENTS,  
RIGHT?

THEY  
OFFERED TO  
COME WITH  
ME.



HM...

HE'S  
CONSIDERING  
IT?!

YOU'RE ALL WAY OVERTHINKING THIS.

THE GRIFFINS  
ARE FRIENDLY,  
AND COMING  
BACK TO TALK  
SHOP ABOUT  
SCIENCE AND  
MAGIC.

HECK, I SHOULD  
PROBABLY GO TO  
TALK WITH—



LOOK, TEDD'S RIGHT  
THAT WE SHOULDN'T  
BE WORRIED...

BUT ELLIOT'S RIGHT THAT  
WE SHOULD BE PREPARED  
JUST IN CASE SOMETHING  
UNEXPECTED HAPPENS...

AND EDWARD'S RIGHT THAT  
THERE SHOULD BE A THIRD  
PERSON THAT THE GRIFFINS  
SHOULD GET ALONG WITH.



AND THAT  
PERSON  
SHOULD BE  
ME.

I'M NON-THREATENING, FLY.  
CAN PROTECT ALL OF US WITH  
TELEKINESIS, AND AM, ACCORDING  
TO SEVERAL RELIABLE SOURCES,  
"RIDICULOUSLY POWERFUL".

PLUS, I BET THE  
SCIENCE-GRIFFIN  
WILL FIND ME  
INTERESTING.

I AM A  
SUPER-  
POWERED  
TALKING POINT,  
AND I CAN  
HELP.





And so, the "Have a Nice, Friendly Chat With a Couple of Lovely Griffins" party was decided.

### Elliot, the Default



The person the griffins expect to be there (and, when part cell phone, has the coordinates of where to go in the middle of an unkempt forest in his head).

### Edward, the Professor



An older, experienced person wearing glasses who claims to have new information about the clog in the flow of shared magic between worlds that are one world.

### Grace, the Squirrel Lion



An adorable powerhouse, the griffins will be able to sense her strength, and might see her as royalty. Andrea the griffin might also nerd out over her.

Though the griffins Tara and Andrea were expected to be friendly, lovely, and worthy of their own romcom sitcom, certain dangerous possibilities existed (especially after four weeks).

Edward had an extensive list of expected unexpected things that would complicate, or cancel, the meeting.



THE GRIFFINS ARE GIVEN NEW INSTRUCTIONS BY SOMEONE, SUCH AS FROM A KING...  
THE GRIFFINS BRING A JERK COLLEAGUE WITH THEM...  
SOMEONE ELSE ENTIRELY SHOWS UP INSTEAD OF THEM...  
THE GRIFFINS ARE FRENZIED BY STRANGE MUSHROOMS...

Given how quickly Grace could transform, and not wanting to appear threatening (or start Bigfoot rumors if someone saw her), it was decided that she would begin the meeting in her default human form, though with her antennae out for elevated senses.



Elliot's Cheerleadra form would be optimized for defense, awareness, and getting away quickly.

The maximum he could put in any stat was three, and he would get two extra points by shrinking a bit.

Charm was ignored, as one would just be normal Elliot-level social skills, and they weren't THAT worried about Elliot saying something that would end in disaster.

Tech was given a point so Elliot could gain access to "cell phone powers" while transformed.

<b>Charm</b>	1
<b>Awareness</b>	3
<b>Tech</b>	2
<b>Strength</b>	1
<b>Flight</b>	3
<b>Endurance</b>	3
<b>Resistance</b>	3
<b>Total</b>	16/14



Ashley was a normal girl from California who moved to Moperville



Then she was kidnapped by her magic boyfriend, who had been possessed by another him, and his magically created twin sister who had been possessed by a vampire

This was less normal



Exposed to ancient magic within a secret government facility, magic potential awakened within Ashley, making her a wizard

Specifically magic "potential". She was literally no more powerful than before, and was a wizard only in an extremely technical sense

Fortunately for her, she fits in magic had also turned a magic training wand that had never worked before into a working magic training wand!



His name was Kevin

After weeks of putting it off (due to being kidnapped being quite upsetting, actually), Ashley's first training session with Kevin at Tedd's house was the morning of the same day as the evening meeting with the griffins.



Also, Sarah was there



Sarah thinks magic wands are cool.

'TIS I,  
KEVIN!

AND...  
WOW

IT'S BEEN A WHILE!  
MITTENS, HAVE YOU BEEN  
PROCRASTINATING?!

M-MAYBE  
A LITTLE

BAD  
MITTENS!

WHO  
ARE  
YOU?

YOU'RE NOT  
A WIZARD!

I'M SARAH. JM.  
I LIKE MAGIC, AND I THINK  
WANDS ARE COOL!

**ACCEPTED!**

EH?

AND YOU!  
YOU'RE  
CONFUS-  
ING!

I'M GRACE!  
I'M A HUMAN-  
ALIEN-SQUIRREL-  
ALIEN HYBRID!

**NOTED!**

EH?

AND YOU . . .

**GRADUATED!**

EH?

ANOTHER PERSON? YOU'RE NOT A WIZARD. AND YOU ALREADY HAVE DECENT MAGIC!

I'M ELLIOT,  
ASHLEY'S BOYFRIEND.

IGNORED!

EH?

LISTEN UP!

MITTENS IS THE ONLY PROPER STUDENT HERE, AND SHE WILL GET ALL OF MY ATTENTION!

ALSO SARAH, BECAUSE FLATTERY WILL GET YOU EVERYWHERE

EH?

BUT MOSTLY  
**MITTENS!**

FOR I AM BUT ONE WAND, AND NEEDED FOR THE STRENGTH TRAINING!

SARAH CAN STRENGTH TRAIN ON MITTENS' BREAKS.

THE REST OF YOU CAN LISTEN TO LESSONS, I GUESS.

IF YOU REALLY HAVE NOTHING BETTER TO DO

STRENGTH TRAINING?

OH YES! IT'S VERY SIMPLE!

I AM A WAND WITH SPELLS YOU CAN USE, BUT I DON'T HELP WITH ANY OF MY OWN POWER WHEN YOU CAST THEM!

I ALSO BLOCK AMBIENT MAGIC FROM HELPING YOU CAST THEM!

THEREFORE!

ONE HUNDRED PERCENT OF THE MAGIC USED TO CAST SPELLS WITH ME MUST COME FROM YOU, THE STUDENT!

THIS MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE WITH NO SPELLS TO REALLY TRAIN THEIR MAGIC POWER!

OF COURSE! MAKE CERTAIN ALL THE POWER COMES FROM THE USER. INCLUDE SPELLS THAT REQUIRE A RANGE OF POWER. AND BAM! TRAINING WAND!

SORRY BUT I JUST LEARNED HOW TO MAKE TRAINING WANDS!

I'LL HAVE TO SORT OUT BLOCKING AMBIENT MAGIC, BUT STILL!

HEY!  
GRADUATES  
SHOULDN'T  
INTERRUPT!

FOR NOW, YOU COULD JUST HAVE ME EAT IT

YOU PLOT TO REPLACE ME?!

FIEND! DEVIL!

BEELZEBUB!

WHAT? I DON'T WANT TO MAKE A TALKING WAND LIKE YOU.

O-OF COURSE! THE MAJESTY OF KEVIN IS BEYOND YOU!

SO WHAT KIND OF SPELLS DO WE START WITH?

I HAVE MANY AMAZING SPELLS!

JUST SOMETHING WITH PRACTICE SPELLS.

RIGHT

BUT AT YOUR LEVEL...

Soon

ONE MORE!

YOU CAN DO IT!

DING

VERY GOOD!

THIS IS SO NOT SWORD IN THE STONE.

OF COURSE NOT  
I'M A WAND.

After a few sets of reps of making a wand glow...





WHY SHOULDN'T I BE HAPPY? I ACTUALLY GET TO USE MY ABILITIES TO BE HELPFUL, AND I'M GOING TO BE TALKING TO PEOPLE I CAN JUST BE MYSELF WITH!

BEING HELPFUL AND NOT HIDING WHO I AM? IT'S GREAT!

I CAN'T REALLY ARGUE WITH THAT TEDD. DO YOU HAVE ANY DARK CLOTHES THAT NEED WASHING NOT BACK THERE?

IT'S ALL THERE.

GOOD.



DAD'S HAD NO REACTION TO SEEING ME AS A WOMAN ALL WEEK

IT'S LIKE SOME SWITCH GOT FLIPPED, AND NOW HE'S ALL RELAXED ABOUT IT?

WEEKS AFTER I SAID NOT TO DID ARTHUR SUDDENLY DECIDE TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT ME? I DON'T THINK HE'D DO THAT

MAYBE I SHOULD FINALLY TALK WITH HIM ABOUT HOW I FEEL?



TOMORROW

THERE'S A LOT GOING ON TODAY

HE'LL PROBABLY BE BUSY WITH GRIFFIN INFO TOMORROW

THEN BUSY WEEK-DAYS.

NEXT SATURDAY

SUNDAY

A WEEK FROM SUNDAY FOR SURE.



SO YOU'RE REALLY WORRIED ABOUT TALKING TO THE GRIFFINS, HUH?

I'M NOT... IT'S FINE, THERE'S NO REASON TO THINK THERE'LL BE ANY TROUBLE.

IT'S JUST, IF THERE IS TROUBLE GRIFFINS ARE REALLY STRONG I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO FIGHT MAGIC FLYING CAT-BIRDS, AND THE CURRENT AGREED UPON EMERGENCY STRATEGY IS "RUN AWAY", SO, Y'KNOW

CONCERNs.

OH... OKAY I GET IT

YOU'RE SCARED OF THEM.

WHAT?! I'M NOT SCARED OF THEM!

THEY'RE NICE FRIENDLY BIRD-CAT-People!

I JUST HAVE CONCERNs!

ELLIOT, ONE OF THEM ATTACKED YOU, AND YOU JUST SAID YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO FIGHT THEM.

YOU'RE USED TO LOOKING UP AT GUYS TWICE YOUR SIZE AND KNOWING YOU COULD TAKE THEM IN A FIGHT

OF COURSE THE GRIFFINS ARE SCARY

BUT LIKE TARA WAS TRICKED INTO ATTACKING ME AND I MEAN.

THEY'RE NICE

YEAH, WELL, SO ARE YOU, AND YOU CAN BE PRETTY SCARY

I CAN BE SCARY TO BULLIES, MAYBE.

ER...

UM...

WELL

EH?

ELLIOT, I USED TO KNOW YOU AS "THAT KID WHO FIGHTS TONY FOR FUN."

WHEN I FIRST MOVED HERE, YOU STOOD OUT BECAUSE YOU WERE REALLY INTIMIDATING.

THAT WAS BEFORE I SAW YOUR SHOW THOUGH!

YOU GAVE OFF SUCH A READY-TO-FIGHT VIBE WHEN WE FIRST MET THAT I DIDN'T LIKE YOU

YOU DIDN'T?

AT FIRST!

MY ANTENNAE WERE ALWAYS OUT BACK THEN, AND I WAS PICKING UP ON A LOT OF NUANCED VIBES I WASN'T USED TO YET!

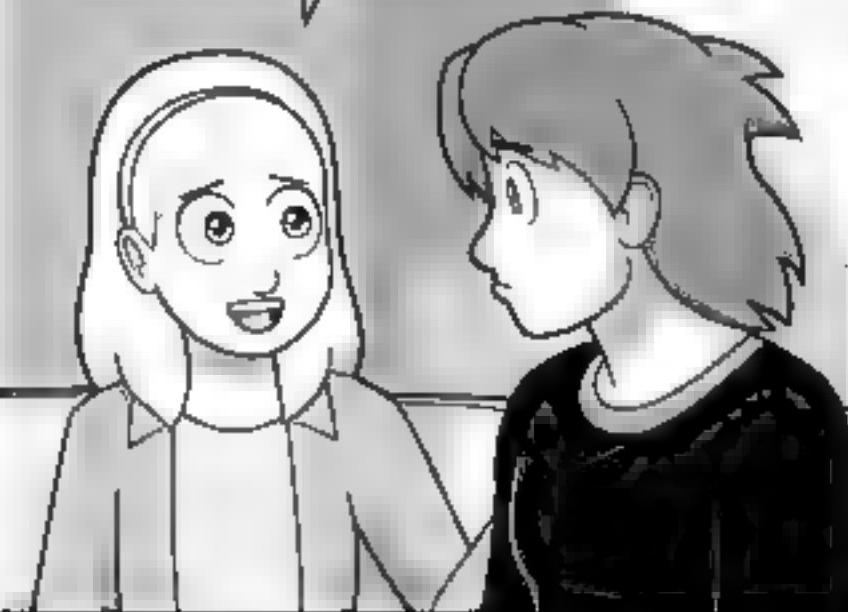
YOUR VIBE WAS JUST SORTA UM...

A-ANYWAY IT'S NOT IMPORTANT! YOU'RE DEFINITELY A GOOD GUY!

ELLIOT THAT VIBE GRACE IS TALKING ABOUT IS YOUR DESIRE TO PROTECT EVERYONE.

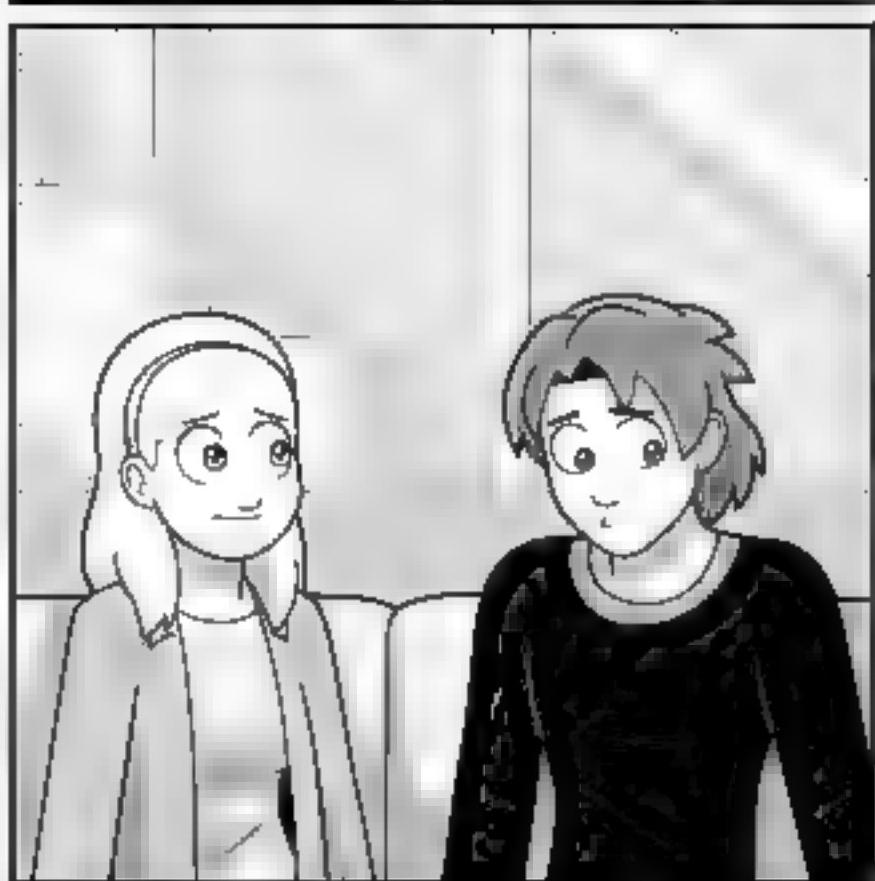
YEAH! LIKE A BIG LOVABLE GUARD DOG!

I'M A DOG AGAIN?!



AND THE NICE GRIFFIN WHO ATTACKED YOU WAS SO SCARY BECAUSE SHE WANTED TO PROTECT HER WIFE

SHE SOUNDS A LOT LIKE YOU A BIT SCARY BUT WITH GOOD INTENTIONS.

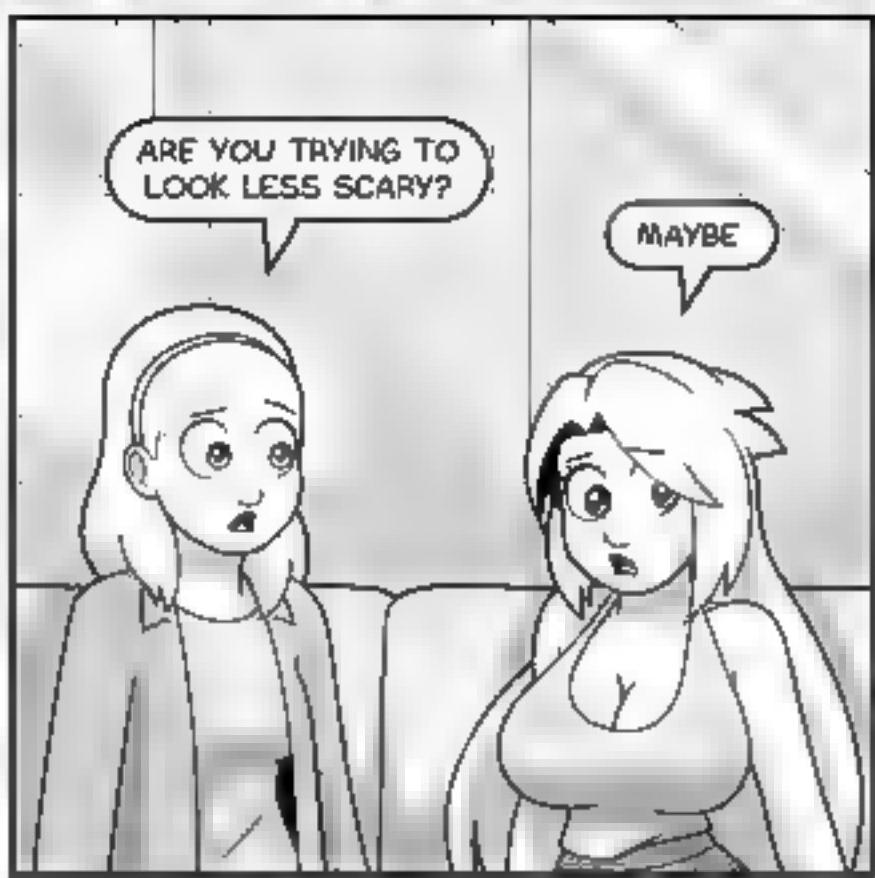


FROOOOMPH



ARE YOU TRYING TO LOOK LESS SCARY?

MAYBE



The far corner of the other side of the basement.

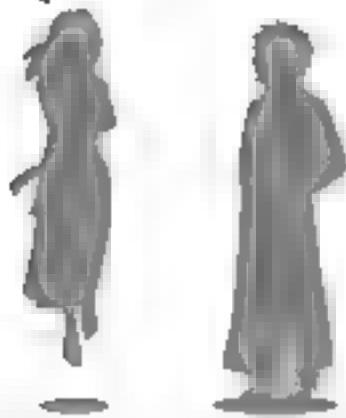


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End Part 6

Part 7 Begins Wednesday, March 9th

I'M NOT SURE "CELL-PHONE POWERS" WERE THE RIGHT CHOICE



BUT IT KEEPS ME FROM USING OTHER SPELLS WITH THIS FORM.

I CAN'T BE "CATLEADRA", OR USE MY VISION SPELL.

VISION SPELL?

TRANSFORMING WITH YOUR PHONE ON YOU MADE IT EASY TO USE GPS, TEXT WITHOUT USING YOUR HANDS. NOT GET LOST IF YOU NEED TO FLY AWAY. INFINITE BATTERY...

IT CAN HIGHLIGHT AND LABEL STUFF FOR ME, LIKE GRIFFINS.

Pretty sure it can do more than that, but you know how it is with spell descriptions.

WENT STRAIGHT FROM TOO MUCH TO TOO LITTLE

Paragraph B, one energetic usage of this spell will directly proportionate to that of the cerebral energy of the celestial number dropped back to Series A. Paragraph A.

This spell does a thing. Whatever.

I WISH YOU'D MENTIONED IT SOONER. I COULD HAVE TRIED LEARNING IT FROM YOU

OH. SORRY...

HELL, IF YOU KIDS WEREN'T WITH ME THIS WOULD JUST BE ANOTHER DAY AT THE OFFICE

HE'D FEEL BETTER IF I WASN'T USELESS.

IN ANY CASE, DON'T YOU HAVE A TALENT FOR SENSING POWER?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. ODDS ARE GOOD THAT WE'RE BOTH ABOUT TO LOOK SILLY FOR WORRYING SO MUCH.

EH... I DO, BUT IT'S NOT RELIABLE

IT JUST SORT OF KICKS IN, AND I'VE MISSED THINGS.

BEFORE...

BUT NOT WITH AN AWARENESS OF THREE, IT WOULD SEEM.

THE GRIFFINS?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS. IT'S JUST LIKE THERE'S A BIG SOMETHING WAY OVER THERE?

AND IT'S LIKE... A PULSE OF DANGER?

A PULSE?

I DUNNO. LIKE, STEADY FLASHES OF AGGRESSION?

LIKE SOMEONE CAN'T DECIDE IF THEY'RE TICKED OR NOT?

ASSUME TICKED.



GRACE

THREE  
TAILS

BOTH OF YOU, BACK AWAY FROM "OVER THERE" SLOWLY NO SUDDEN MOVEMENTS.

BUT...



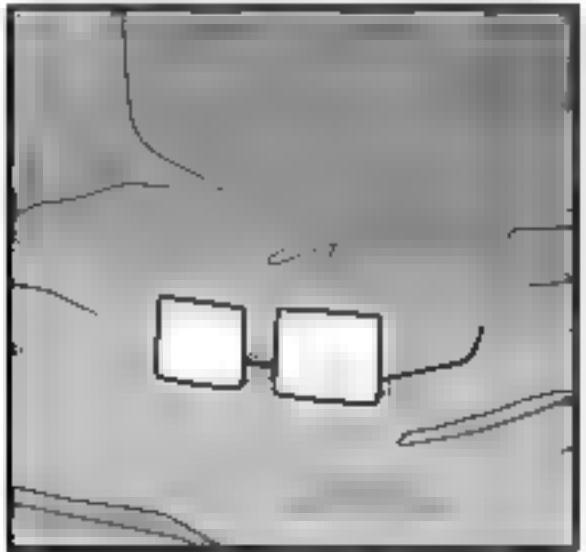
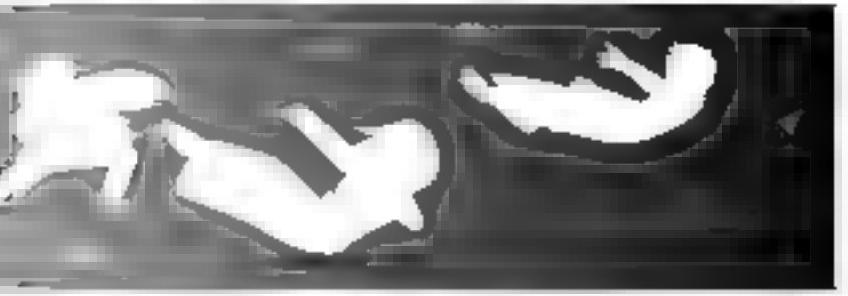
F-

RUN!

HEY!



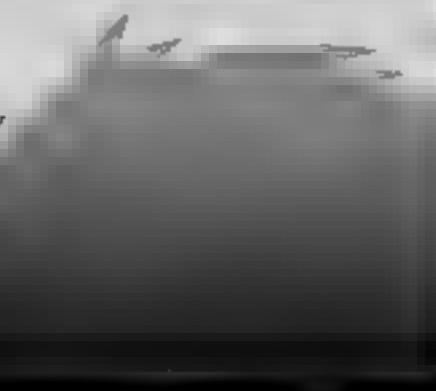
**BARRIER!**



WHOOSH

WHOOSH

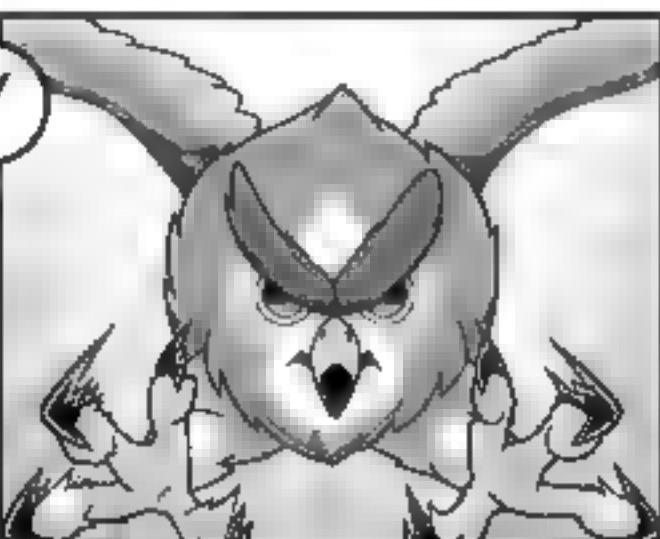
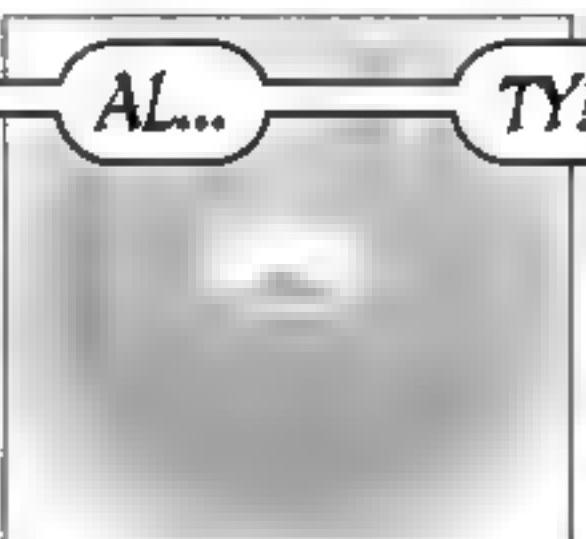
WHOOSH

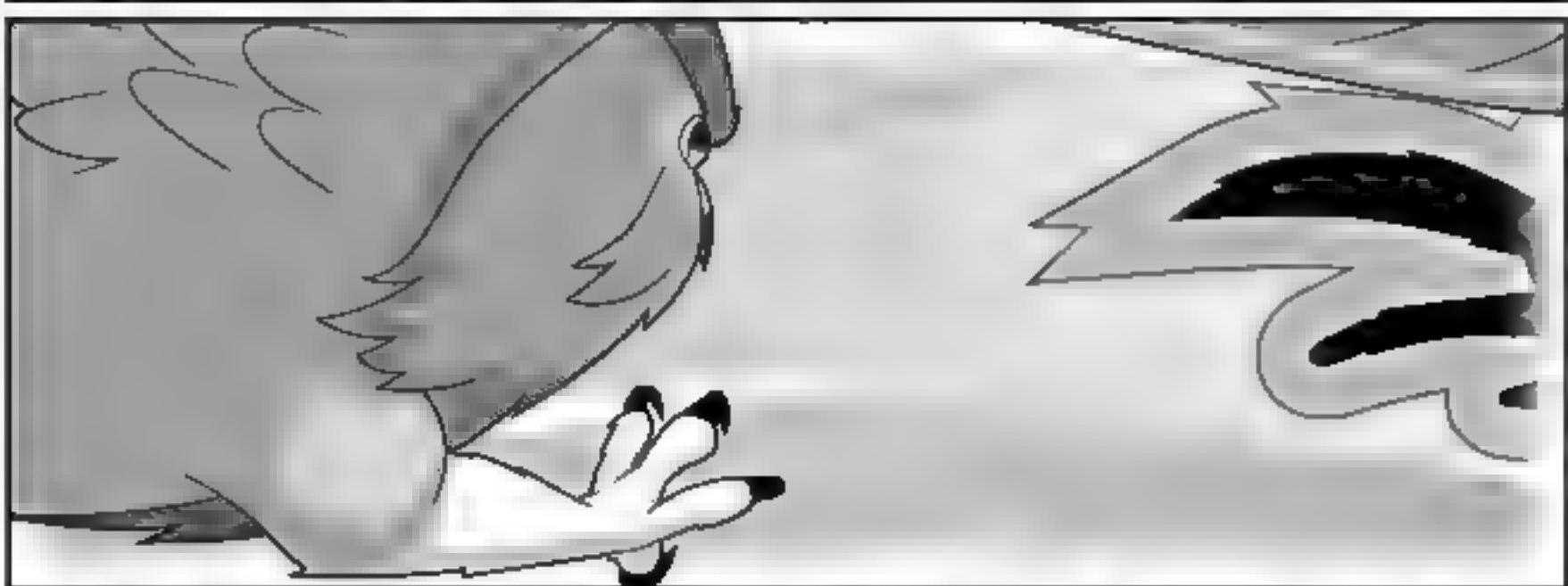
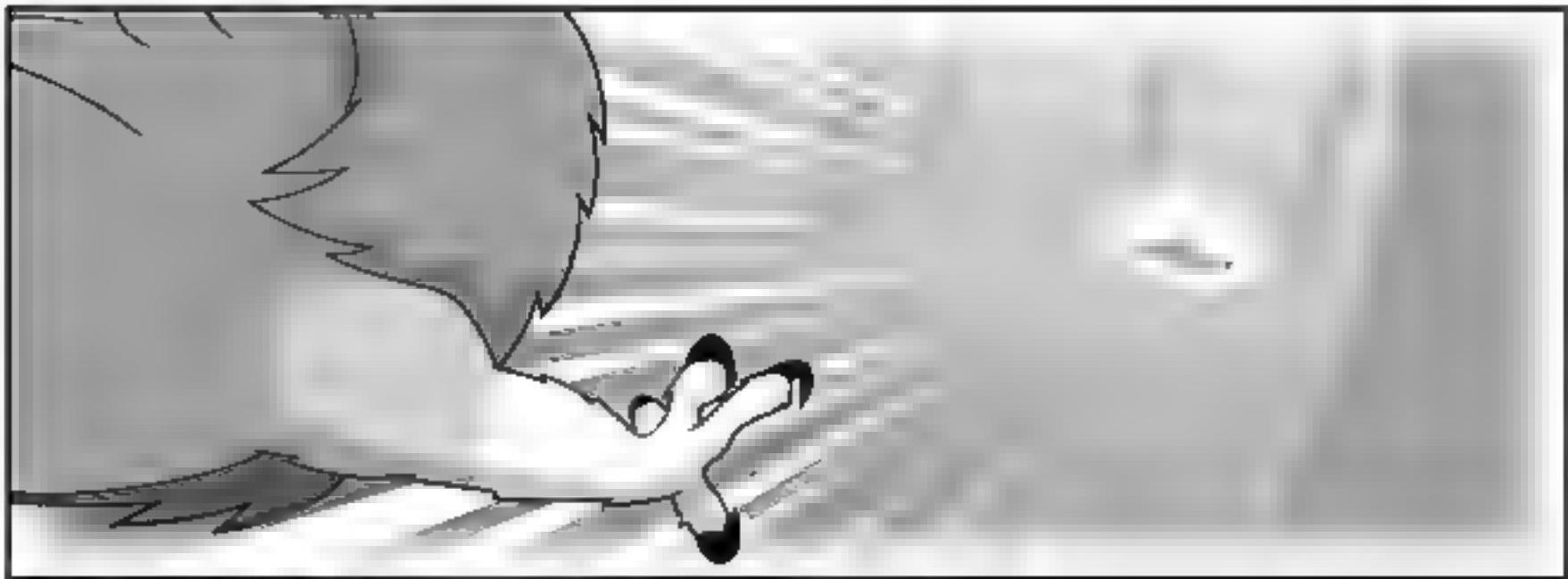


ROY...

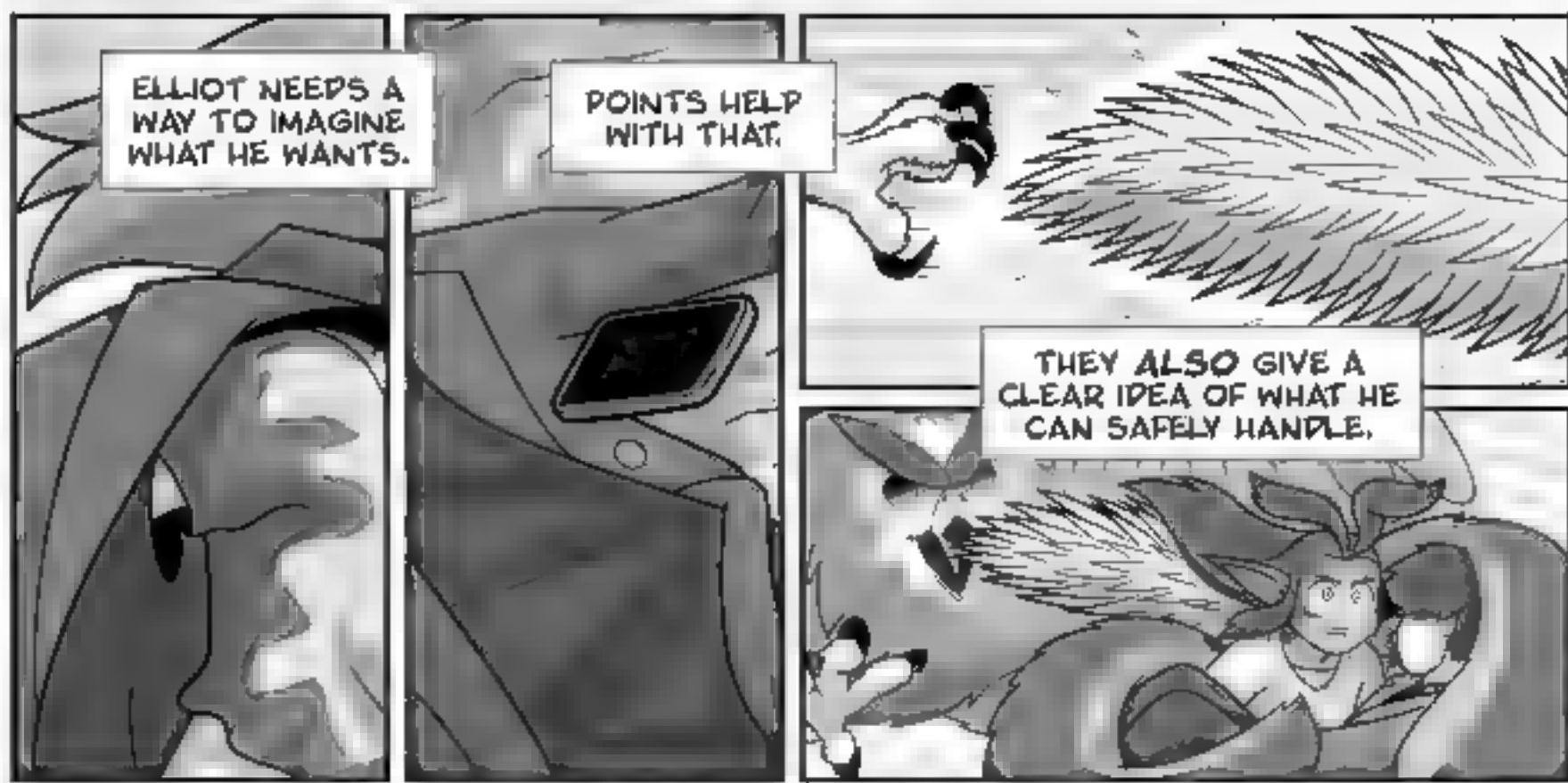
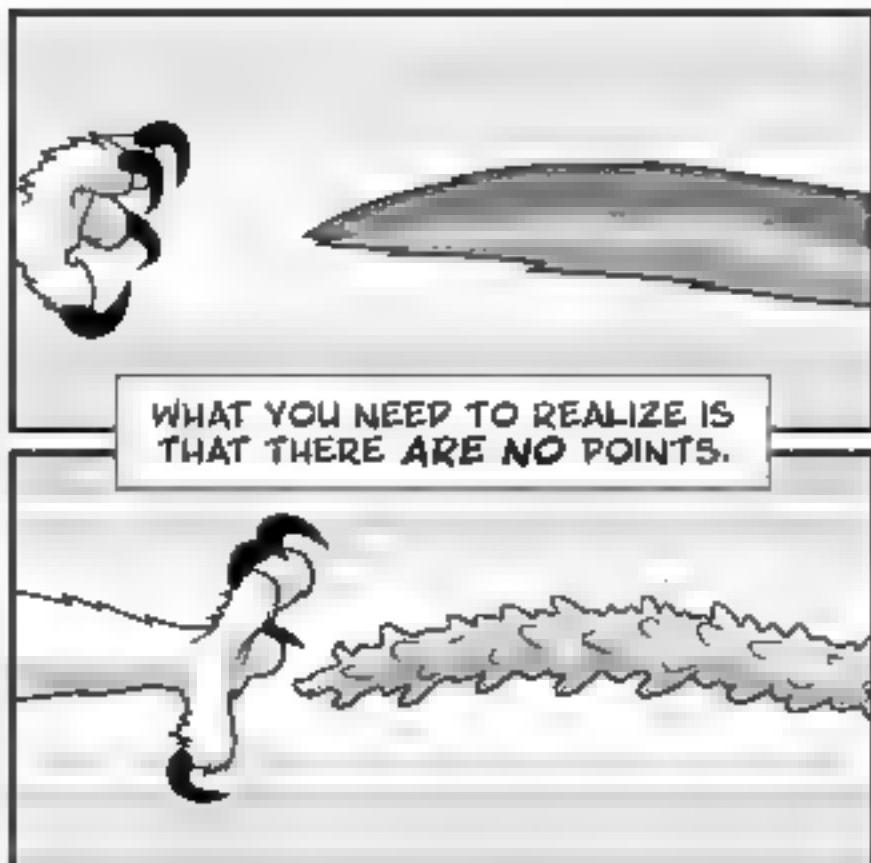
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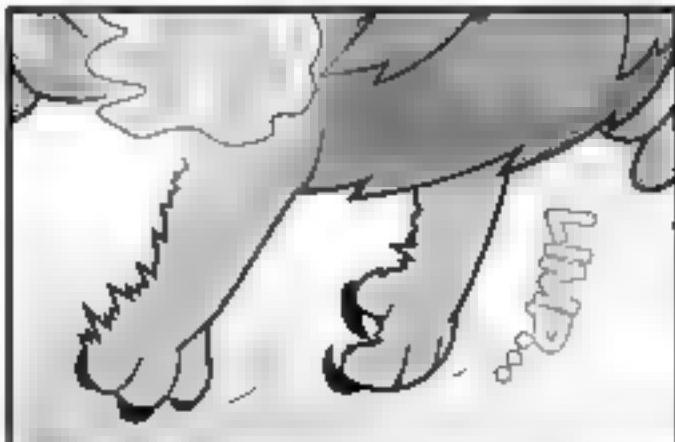
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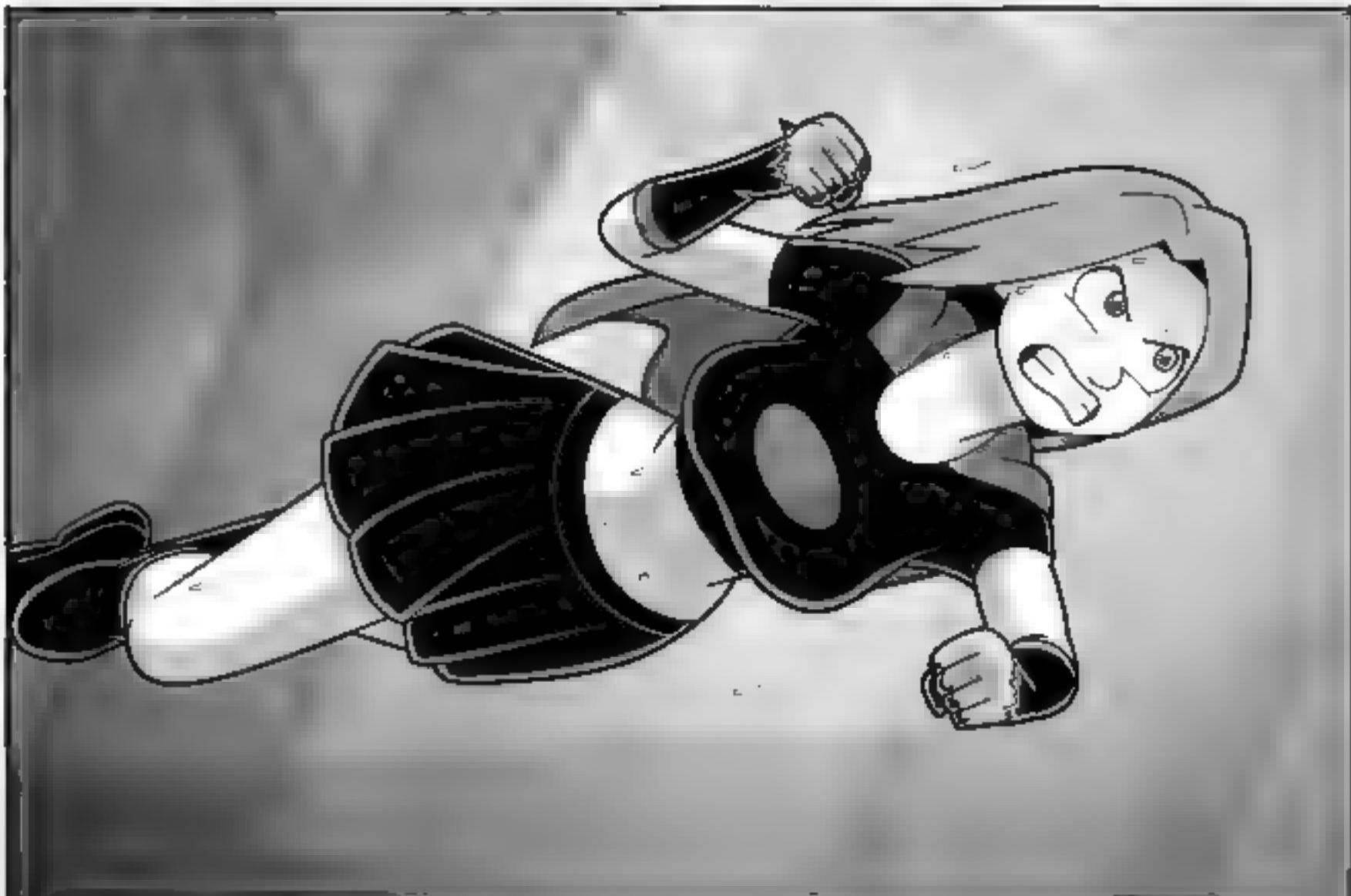
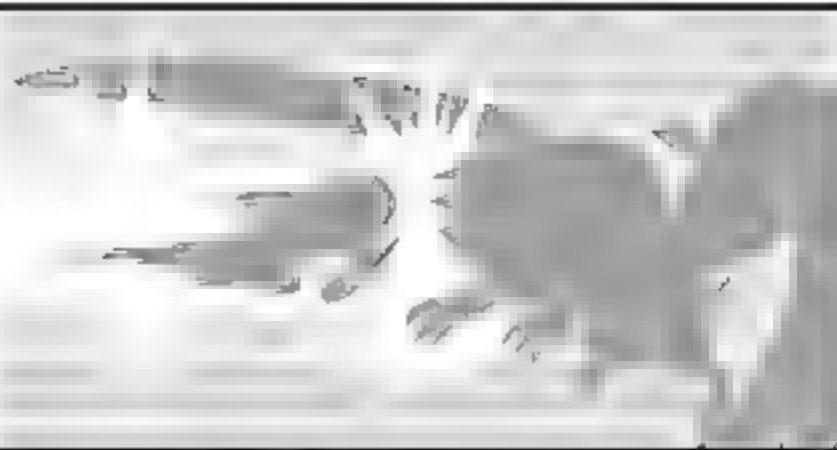


Charm	1	Flight	3
Awareness	3	Endurance	3
Tech	2	Resistance	3
Strength	1	Total	16/14









Charm	1	Flight	5
Awareness	5	Endurance	3
Tech	2	Resistance	3
Strength	5	<b>Total</b>	<b>24/14</b>

DO I SET  
EDWARD  
DOWN AND  
GO AFTER  
THEM?

I DON'T WANT  
TO JUST LEAVE  
HIM SOMEWHERE  
ALONE WHERE IT'D  
BE HARD TO FIND  
HIM AGAIN...

BUT TAKING HIM BACK  
TOWARDS DEX SEEMS  
LIKE A TERRIBLE--

WAIT DEX?

WHY DID I JUST CALL THE GRIFFIN.

OH NO

THAT'S WHY HIS  
VIBE'S FAMILIAR!

HE REMINDS ME OF DEX WHEN  
HE WAS BEING MANIPULATED!

THAT GRIFFIN'S BEING CONTROLLED!

GRAFFIN'S  
DOWN

STILL BREATHING

COULD BE  
FAKING

TRIED TO KILL  
TEDD'S DAD

MAYBE DID KILL  
TEDD'S DAD

ALMOST GOT GRACE



THIS POWER IS  
TOO MUCH

CAN'T KEEP IT

GONNA  
BE USELESS  
AGAIN

WORSE  
THAN  
USELESS

BURNT  
OUT

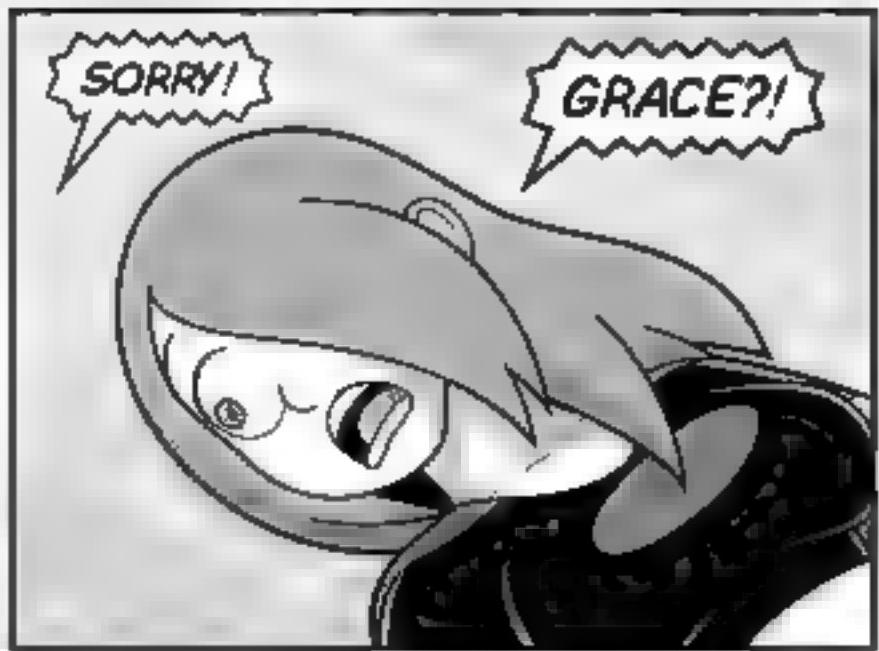
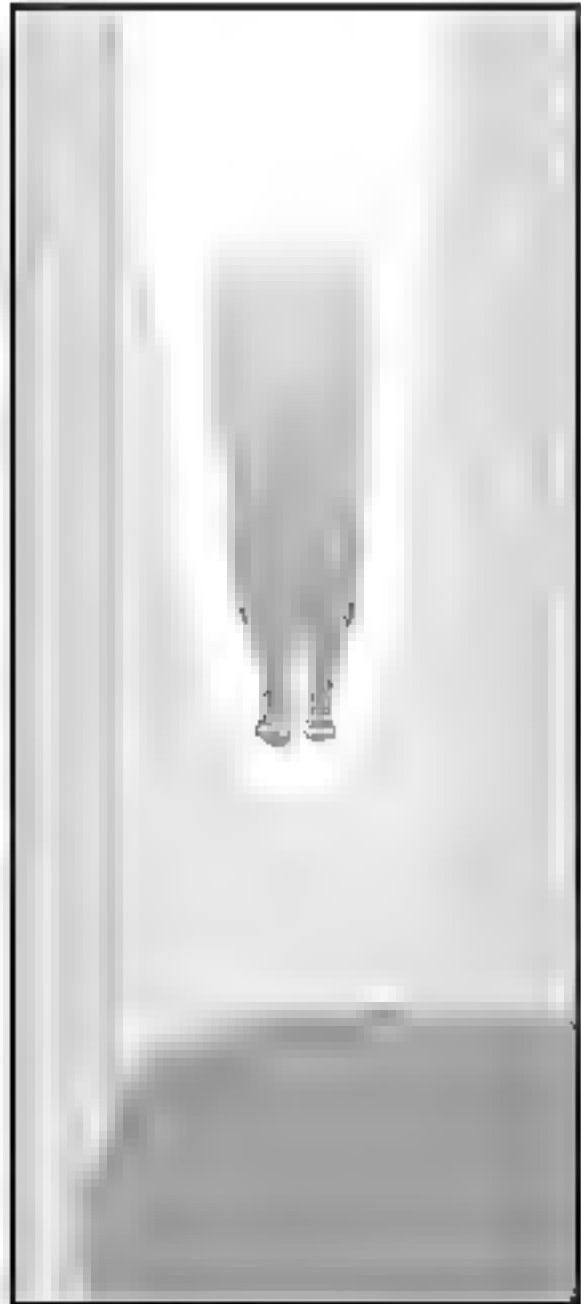
NO WAY NOT  
BURNED OUT

ONE LAST  
ATTACK

FINISH  
IT



• • • **KEEP THEM SAFE**



TEDD'S DAD! IS HE OKAY?!

ALIVE BUT UNCONSCIOUS!

AND YOU BROUGHT HIM HERE?!

IDIOT!

I'M JUST GOING TO BLAME THAT ON YOU BEING EVIL RIGHT NOW

THAT GRIFFIN COULD WAKE UP AND ATTACK AT ANY SECOND! STOP WITH THE TELEKINESIS, AND GET TEDD'S DAD OUT OF HERE WHILE I—

THE GRIFFIN'S MIND CONTROLLED!

HE WHAT?

REMEMBER DEX AT THE MARTIAL ARTS DOJO? THAT GRIFFIN'S GOT THE SAME VIBE!

UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE HAD TO KNOCK HIM OUT, AND YOU SAVED ME AND EDWARD WHEN I COULDN'T REALLY FIGHT BACK, SO PLEASE DON'T...

...FEEL BAD.



GOOD THING  
I'VE GOTTEN  
WAY BETTER AT  
TELEKINESIS.

DID YOU SEND  
OUT THE TEXT?

NO I... I SAW  
TEDD'S DAD GET  
HIT, AND...

A-AND  
THE GRIFFIN.  
AND...

HE SAID THEY  
WOULDN'T GET  
HERE QUICKLY.

YOU NEEDED  
HELP RIGHT  
AWAY, AND.

I THOUGHT I'D  
FIND YOU FASTER  
WITH THAT VISION  
SPELL I WAS TALKING  
ABOUT SO I

I DROPPED  
MY PHONE

WELL... TO  
BE HONEST I  
WAS SORT OF  
COUNTING ON  
YOU TO "GO  
EVIL" AND CATCH  
UP WITH US..

...AND GIVEN  
HOW CLOSE  
HE WAS TO  
GRABBING ME,  
I THINK YOU  
MADE THE  
RIGHT CALL.

He did.

You're... Quite the hero!

But please... S/T.  
You've already... Knocked  
sense... Back into me, and  
you're... Injured ..

I've no intent...  
OF fighting anymore.

YE  
GODS,  
LAD!



GRACE?

NO MORE  
DEX-V BES.  
YOU REALLY  
SHOULD—

WHO OR WHAT  
WAS CONTROLLING  
YOU? ARE THEY  
STILL HERE?!

I doubt... They were  
**EVER** here. I came to  
your side because... I  
had just... enough  
awareness... To know I  
had to get away...

...From royalty.

YOU WERE COMPELLED TO  
ATTACK ROYALTY, BUT YOU  
HAD ENOUGH CONTROL TO  
COME TO OUR WORLD TO  
TRY AND AVOID ROYALTY?

It seemed like a good  
idea... at the time.

I also knew... Two  
other griffins who  
could help me... Would  
be here soon, if not  
already here.

I'M...

I'M SO SORRY

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE...

**DON'T APOLOGIZE!** There is a **FINE LINE**  
between a hero and... a **FOOL**, and you are  
**BETTER** than a fool!

I lost control,  
but I  
**REMEMBER**  
every move I made.  
Every thought not  
my own.

I **NEEDED**  
to be knocked  
out, and you  
swooped in  
**JUST** in time  
to do it.

A **SECOND** later,  
and I would have  
**BROKEN** your  
friend's tail beneath my  
fist, and **THEN...**

Well, I'd rather not  
elaborate on "then".

SPEAKING OF SERIOUS INJURY, I REALLY THINK WE NEED TO GET EDWARD TO A HOSPITAL!

HE'S STILL UNCONSCIOUS!

BY WHICH I MEAN I think he's ENCHANTED, not knocked out!

His royal aura is more radiant than it should be for an unconscious man.

I... Don't think he's unconscious.

He should ALSO be MUCH more injured. He must have reflexively put up defenses, AND softened his landing.

One way to reduce damage from such a landing is to go completely limp, but that's very difficult to do in the heat of the moment.

I doubt he MEANT to effectively knock himself out, but I'm guessing this is a side effect of a spell FORCING him to go limp.

EDWARD DIDN'T NOTICE MAGIC'S RECENT SWITCH TO MANUAL BECAUSE HE ALWAYS CAST SPELLS THAT WAY.

BUT IF HE HAD TO CAST SOMETHING LIFE-SAVING VERY QUICKLY...

RIGID BREAK

LOOSE

VS

IF YOU'RE RIGHT, HOW DO WE HELP HIM?

The enchantment should wear off on its own soon.

YOU THINK, OR YOU KNOW?

I think. I can't actually confirm it.

Enchantments on common humans are easily noticed, and seen through, but that's not true with royalty like him, OR beings like us.

If it was, the guards to the entryway to this world might have seen I needed help.

Speaking  
of those  
guards...

Three griffins are  
approaching.

I assume the griffins I was expecting  
to come here, Andrea and Tara, and  
one of the guards.

But **WHICH** of  
the two guards...

Please let  
me stand.  
They might  
react badly  
when they  
get here if  
you don't.

LET YOU STAND?  
WHAT'S STOPPING  
YOU?

I AM.

I'VE BEEN HOLDING HIM DOWN  
WITH TELEKINESIS SINCE THE  
MOMENT I SET YOU DOWN.

HOW  
STRONG IS  
SHE?!

I'M NOT SURE HE  
COULDN'T FORCE HIS WAY  
OUT OF IT IF HE REALLY  
TRIED, AND I CAN'T KEEP  
DOING IT FOR MUCH  
LONGER ANYWAY.

OKAY, BUT I'M PUSHING  
DOWN TWICE AS HARD  
IF YOU MAKE ANY  
SUDDEN MOVEMENTS!

Understood.  
Thank you.

PLEASE DON'T  
MAKE ANY SUDDEN  
MOVEMENTS I CAN'T  
ACTUALLY DO THAT  
AND MY ANTENNAE  
ARE SO TIRED

I have not introduced myself. I am...

# LIAM TYRANT SLAYER.

I'M GRACE.

ELLIOT UM.  
"TYRANT SLAYER"?

An ancestor of  
mine took issue  
with a tyrant.

THIS IS EDWARD. AND  
I'M SETTING HIM DOWN...

I REALLY WANT  
MY ARMS AND TAILS  
FREE BEFORE MORE  
PEOPLE SHOW UP

BUT MY ANTENNAE ARE  
STAYING FOCUSED ON YOU

WHICH YOU MAY LACK  
CONTEXT FOR, BUT—

No, I understand.  
They focus your  
telekinesis.

I GUESS IT WAS  
PRETTY OBVIOUS.

I apologize if the  
guard who's about  
to arrive is rude.

I WILL  
REPRIMAND AS  
NECESSARY.

THANKS?

The three on their way are clearly not as adept at sensing others as I am.

And... is one of them going in completely the wrong direction?!

Oh. Right. Andrea.

**OVER HERE!**

WE'RE NOT FIGHTING, SO DON'T MAKE US BAD GUESTS!

Well, worse guests.

**NOBODY MOVE!**

I'm getting to the bottom of this!



# LORD TYRANT SLAYER!



We are **NOT** fighting, and all fault for this situation lies with **ME**. They did nothing wrong, and are to be treated with respect.

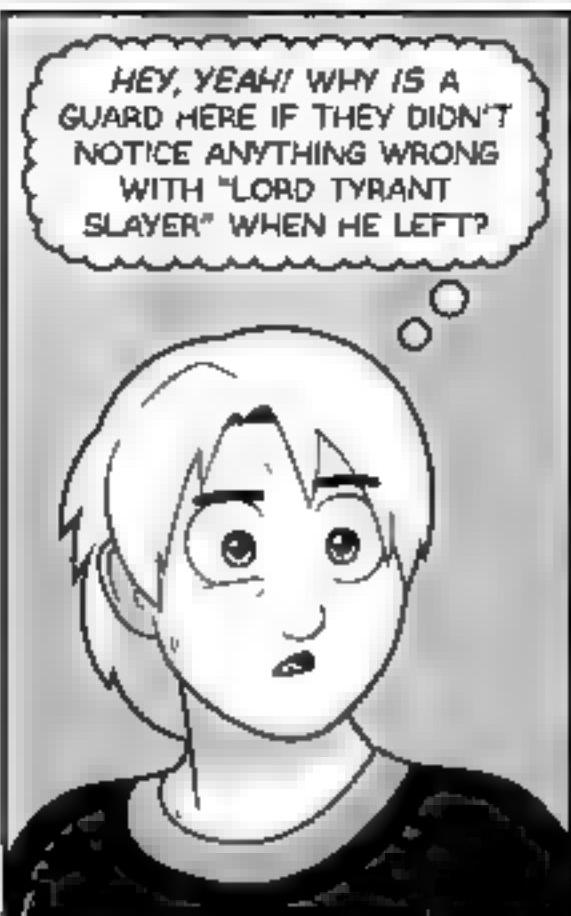
**WHY ARE YOU HERE,** Dwight? **YOU** should be guarding the way to this world!



HEY, YEAH! WHY IS A GUARD HERE IF THEY DIDN'T NOTICE ANYTHING WRONG WITH "LORD TYRANT SLAYER" WHEN HE LEFT?

T-t-terribly sorry, but your servant made wild claims that **CAN-NOT** be allowed to stand!

Virginia? Is she here?



That's true.

The royalty we met here had **NO** concept of what we call royalty.



Meaning only  
that royalty here  
**HIDES**, and  
rules from **THE  
SHADOWS**.

Hello. Tara, you tend  
to Elliot. I'll make  
sure the royalty and  
the girl are okay.

Right!

I-I'M  
FINE!  
YOU  
DON'T  
NEED  
TO

AH! Tara and  
Andrea! Hello!

FINE MY TAIL.  
I BARELY recognize  
you, you're **SO  
HOLLOW**, and your  
hands are a **MESS**.

IS "HOLLOW"  
WHAT THEY  
CALL BEING  
BURNED OUT  
ON MAGIC?

I can sanitize the area and  
manually mend surface level cuts.  
That should prevent infection and  
scarring, or at least keep it light.

We don't have the expertise  
needed for internal healing, and  
in the state you're in, I don't  
recommend healing acceleration.

It could do more  
harm than good  
with your current  
low stamina.

UH.. OKAY WOW  
THANK YOU

It's the  
least we  
can do.

And what, exactly, did Virginia have to say about me?

She claimed you were acting strangely, and that something "felt off" about you.

She got it into her head that you were under **MIND CONTROL**, and practically **BEGGED** me to help retrieve you.

I see. Well, Dwight, that wasn't betrayal. I really was under mind control.

I was compelled to attack royalty, and to not tell anyone.

Knowing Andrea and Tara were on their way, and thinking there wouldn't be any royalty, I made my way here.

You—  
**WHAT?!**

Unfortunately, there **WAS** royalty here, and there was fighting.

There... but...

That unconscious man...

His aura...

**YOU ATTACKED FOREIGN ROYALTY?!**

This doesn't make it okay, but he's not considered royalty on this side of things.



Masking one's presence is a skill. Summoning up power for a spell MIGHT give you away, but not if you can cast the spell in the same moment.

Really, the best evidence that Liam was under mind control is that everyone here is still alive.

Because mind control limits magic use...



JM... I ASSUME FLYING NEEDS MAGIC, BECAUSE GRIFFINS ARE TOO BIG TO FLY OTHERWISE...

Hey.

AND THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE I COULD SENSE WITH MY ANTENNAE, BUT I NEVER SAW IT?

PHANTOM ARMS.

HE HAD TWO GIANT, HUMAN-LIKE ARMS FLOATING AROUND HIM.



Flying is nothing. So are "phantom arms". Our **BABIES** figure out how to do **THAT**.



Nothing else? Glowing feathers? Burning talons? Song magic?

UH...

NO...



Then it's true.

Lord Tyrant Slayer wasn't fighting at **ANYTHING** close to his full strength.



SO NOT ONLY DID I BEAT UP SOMEONE WHILE THEY WERE UNDER MIND CONTROL, I DID SO WHILE THEY WERE SEVERELY WEAKENED?

Hey, you should sit down.

Are you **SURE** you didn't do any more magic, Liam? This man seems unconscious, but I see no signs of injury, and his aura is **MUCH** too visible.

He reacted to my charging by putting up a magic barrier.

When I slammed into the barrier, it burst in a way that sent him flying.

And **YOU'RE** fine after ramming into the equivalent of an **EXPLODING CASTLE WALL?**

BLINK! BLINK!

Huh. Now that you mention it, that should have killed me.

KILLED YOU!?

I ran into it head-first at top speed **WITHOUT** magic protection. I'm not **INVINCIBLE**.

K-KILLED?!

JUSTICE JUSTICE

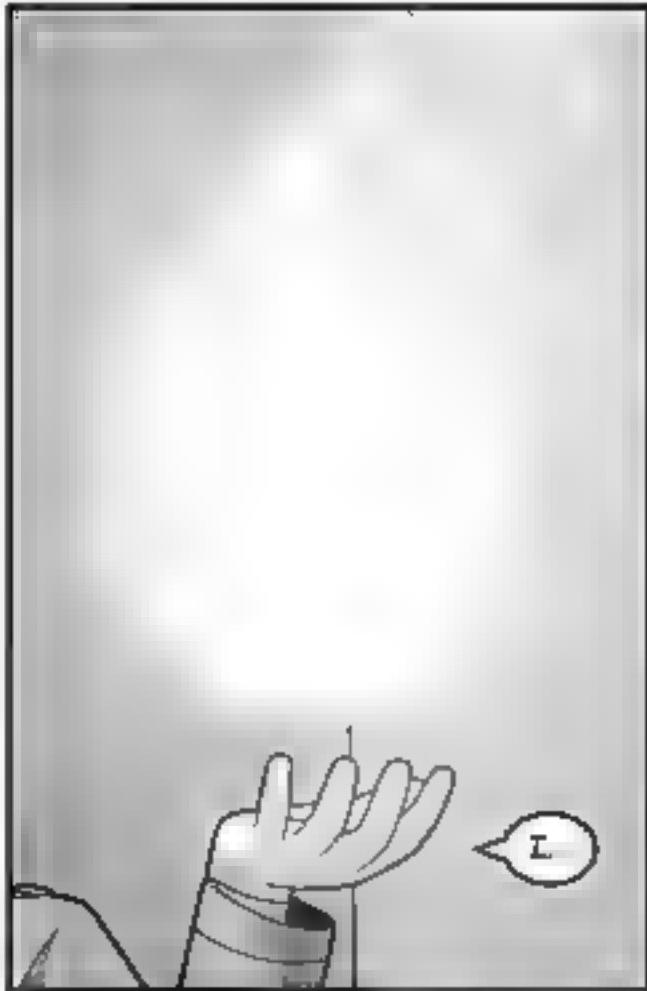
AH! There she is.

Don't worry, virginia! I am undamaged!





**IS THAT TECHNOLOGY?!**



Such intensity!

MY GLASSES DIDN'T HAPPEN TO BE FOUND DID THEY? THEY FELL OFF EARLIER.

Oh. He's squinting to see better.

Still intense

Y YES! THEY'RE IN MY BAG!

DWIGHT, IS IT ALL RIGHT IF SHE BRINGS THEM OVER TO ME?

Um, of course, it's fine, I...

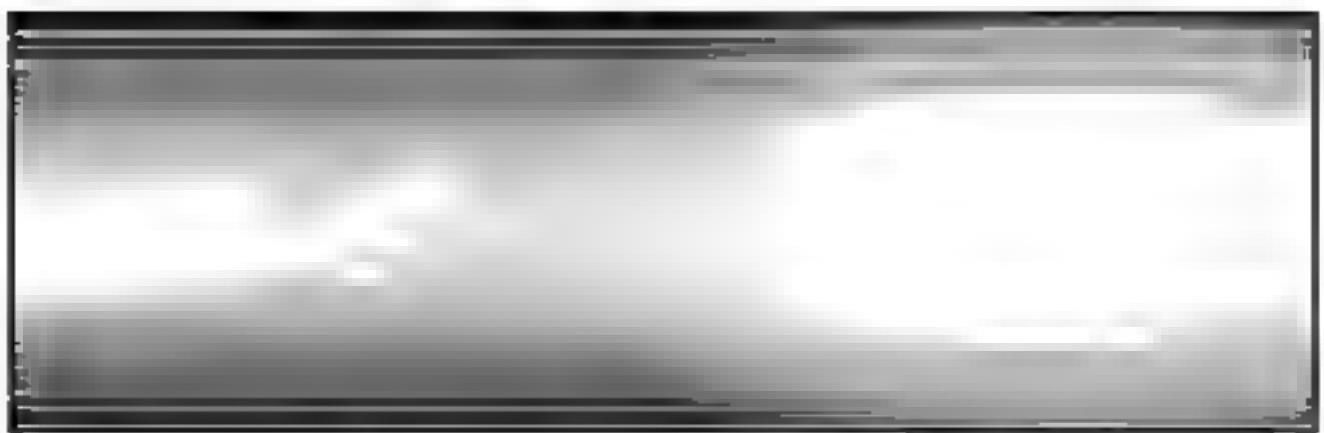
ZOOM

You have to understand!

I had **NO IDEA** what that thing was...

...And **URYUOMS** tried to use technology to  
**TAKE OVER THE WORLD!**





SIGHT!

A transport vehicle from outer space with an entire **COLONY** of uryuoms crashed on our world!

Stranded, they tried to use their technology to take the **ENTIRE WORLD** for themselves!

THAT'S ONE VERSION OF EVENTS FROM SEVERAL THOUSAND YEARS AGO.

SEVERAL THOUSAND YEARS?! HE MAKES IT SOUND LIKE LAST WEEK!

It's **OFFICIAL HISTORY!** It's taught in government-funded schools and everything!

There **ARE** records from that time that suggest the situation wasn't **NEARLY** that simple, nor one-sided.

**URYUOM** records say that, and **URYUOMS** can **LIE!**

AS OPPOSED TO EVERYONE ELSE WHO EXPLODE IF THEY LIE?

Our courts use orbs created by the Ancients, beings you would call "immortals", that can detect when someone isn't saying something that's at least **TECHNICALLY TRUE**.

These do not work with uryuoms, which **MOSTLY** means they'd have a slightly easier time fibbing in court if everyone didn't know this.

This has been twisted into the prejudice that uryuoms are liars.

I didn't mean *IN GENERAL*. I meant about *BIG*, on the record—

# ENOUGH!

Ultimately, these reasons to distrust uryuoms are **EXCUSES**. If they were not there, people would invent **OTHER** ways to rationalize it.

The prejudice against uryuoms boils down to them originating from somewhere else, and being different.

They cannot use the same magic everyone else can, and we deny them the technology they could use to bridge the gap.

This limits their work options, and denies them conveniences others take for granted.

Prejudices are passed on, and those in power make scapegoats of them.



We created, and perpetuate, the situation they're in, and then judge them for not doing more.

YOU INCLUDE YOURSELF IN THAT



Is that... **ANGER** under his mask?

I am an advocate for change, but I cannot pretend I stand outside the system.

Especially not when I am as highly ranked in society as a griffin can be.

Whether I like it or not, I am a part of this unjust system, and must remain so if I am to be of any use to anyone.



**WAIT WAIT  
WAIT!**

I don't care where people are from! I care about the dangers of uryuom technology usurping magic, and plots that can be lied about, and... and...

I mean, we're not...

We didn't ban their technology for **NO REASON...** Right?

Well... **THIS** is unexpected...

You're fresh out of training, correct? Barely an adult?

I wouldn't say **BARELY** an adult. I—

**DWIGHT.**

Y—yes?

Look at Virginia.

Can you honestly tell me you feel threatened by her?

That she poses any danger to you, a trained guard griffin?

Do you think she would be my assistant if I did not trust her?

Do you truly feel it is right to judge her based purely on her being an uryuom?



The shame  
you feel is  
deserved.



That shame,  
however, says  
good things.



It says  
there is hope  
for you.









SO YOU, AND  
EVERY URYUOM  
ON THE PLANET,  
ARE HIDING  
WHO YOU ARE?

AND MAGIC  
IS HOARDED  
BY PEOPLE  
WHO USE IT  
IN SECRET?

LONG AGO, THE  
URYUOMS ON THIS  
EARTH DECIDED NOT  
TO REVEAL THEM-  
SELVES TO MOST  
OF HUMANITY

NATURALLY, IT IS NOT FELT  
UNANIMOUSLY THAT IT SHOULD BE  
THAT WAY BUT IT'S SOMETHING  
THEY HAVE CONTINUED WITH.

YEAH...

AS FOR MAGIC,  
MAGIC WANTED TO  
BE A SECRET

MAGIC ITSELF  
WANTS TO BE A  
SECRET

WELL, IT DID, BUT  
THEN IT CHANGED  
ITS MIND FOREVER.

AND MAGIC  
TOLD SOME-  
ONE THIS.

SOMETHING CALLED  
THE WILL OF MAGIC  
DID, YEAH.

I HAVE SO  
MANY  
QUESTIONS!

Andrea, sweetie, after  
all that's happened, we  
should **PROBABLY**  
just stick to what we  
came here to discuss.

THEN I WILL BEG FOR  
ANOTHER MEETING!

IT'S TRUE MAGIC "CHANGED ITS MIND FOREVER" BECAUSE TECHNOLOGY, AND HOW MANY PEOPLE THERE ARE NOW, ARE MAKING IT IMPOSSIBLE TO HIDE

IT USED TO BE IF TOO MANY PEOPLE KNEW HOW TO USE IT, MAGIC WOULD CHANGE HOW IT WORKS, AND SORT OF TAKE ITSELF AWAY FOR A BIT

IT WAS KINDA LIKE FLIPPING OVER A TABLE WHEN A BOARD GAME ISN'T GOING YOUR WAY



UM, DOES... DOES YOUR SIDE HAVE ?

WE HAVE BOARD GAMES.

I WANT TO SEE GRIFFINS PLAYING BOARD GAMES.



AND THOUGH IT MIGHT BE INEVITABLE BECAUSE MAGIC HAS BEEN KEPT SECRET FOR SO LONG, REVEALING MAGIC NOW IS DANGEROUSLY COMPLICATED

NO NEED TO MENTION THAT MOST OF US DIDN'T KNOW MAGIC WOULD CHANGE IF IT WAS TOO WIDELY KNOWN.

WHICH WOULD ALSO BE TRUE FOR REVEALING URYUOMS.

MAYBE FAR WORSE, GIVEN HOW URYUOMS HERE MUST BE HIDING THEIR PRESENCE...



WHEN I NOTICED YOU, THE GRASS ON THIS SIDE STARTED TO LOOK GREENER. BUT

MAYBE IT'S NOT...



AND THEY HAVE THE "THE GRASS IS ALWAYS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE" EXPRESSION.



REALITY IS WEIRD.



**LORD TYRANT SLAYER!**  
Can we PLEASE go and report  
what **MIGHT** have been a plot to  
**MURDER THE QUEEN** now?!

HEH! If  
**THAT** was the  
plan, it was a  
**POOR** one.

But I  
concede the  
point. We  
should leave.

And so...

HE SAID HE WAS THE  
HIGHEST RANK IN SOCIETY  
GRIFFINS COULD BE

CAN GRIFFINS  
NOT BE ROYALTY?

Only those with a royal  
aura can be true royalty,  
and only **HUMANS** have  
ever had that aura.

The **IDEA** was to  
keep magic at the  
center of political  
power, but I **REALLY**  
think our ancestors  
dropped the ball on  
**THAT** agreement.

SO, EVEN AS A  
NOBLE, LORD TYRANT  
SLAYER CAN'T DO MUCH  
MORE THAN ARGUE  
FOR CHANGE.

AND  
HOPE THAT  
ROYALTY  
LISTENS.



Royalty **DOES** need the support of  
the people, so things could change  
with **OVERWHELMING** popular  
opinion, but...



"There is one guard  
on the right rotation  
that we **CAN** trust,  
but there are always  
**TWO** guards."

"By my command, or  
a serious situation  
involving me, we can get  
the guard we don't trust  
to leave their post."

"Thanks to the truth  
orbs, however, whatever  
explanation I give later  
has to **TECHNICALLY**  
be **TRUE**."

"We will fabricate a scenario  
centered on me that justifies  
them abandoning their post  
to go to the other side."

"I will get the guard far away  
from the entrance on that  
side, and keep them busy."

"We can use the fact that  
friends of mine are meeting  
people there to talk at length  
about our side of reality."

"I will give you as much time as  
I can to reach the other side,  
and to get somewhere safe."

"I won't be able to join your  
mission, **OR** help you return  
home, for a long time."

"Until then, my friends..."

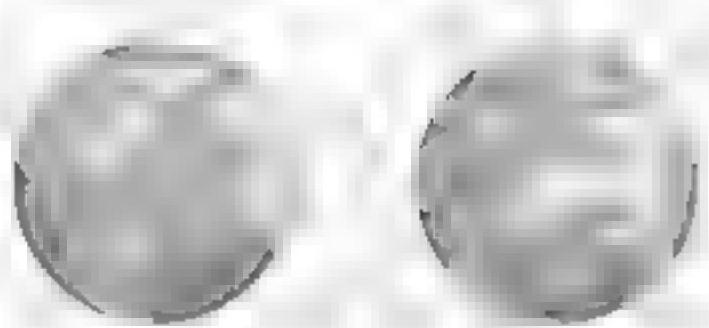


The rest is  
up to you.

Thanks to hack writers who think they know how quantum physics work, we're all familiar with the concept of parallel universes



Less familiar are people with the shocking truth that there are at least two sides to our own universe, and there are ways that these sides are connected



One connection is a flow of ambient magic

On the side lucky enough to have Grace, this ambient magic does not get used for much, and can even be a nuisance



On the side lucky enough to have griffins, however, ambient magic energy is used as a renewable resource, and not having enough of it can be an inconvenience



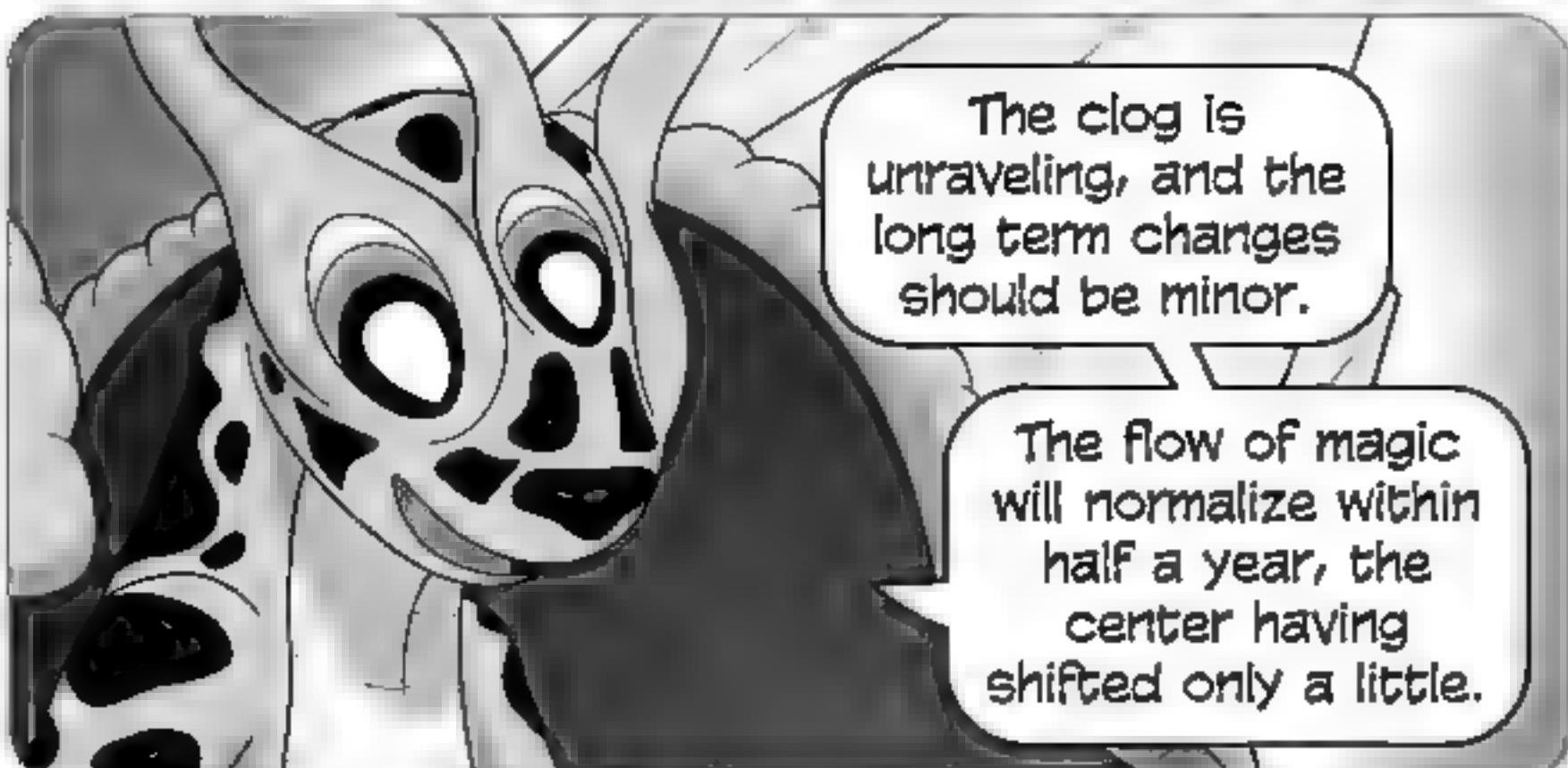
Pandora Chaos Raven, attempting to change the world in ways that would be better for her son, disrupted the local flow of magic from the side with Grace to the side with griffins.



Though she later decided to undo the clog, convoluted immortal rules meant she couldn't do it herself. She needed to guide someone else through doing it.

She reset before this could happen, and left no instructions behind

The magic clog has not been removed, but it also has not been maintained.





THAT IS GOOD NEWS.

IT IS!

Though I would not be here...



Longitude  
and  
latitude.

This is woodland,  
where the center  
of the flow of  
magic was...

...And **THIS** is where  
it's going to end up.

MOPERVILLE  
UNIVERSITY.

THE MIDDLE  
OF MOPERVILLE  
UNIVERSITY?!

OF ALL THE  
PLACES THE  
FLOW OF MAGIC  
COULD GO. WHY  
THERE?

There does not  
yet seem to be  
a reason.

"YET"?

Magic perceives patterns  
mortal beings cannot.

An alien perception  
perceiving reality  
through that which is  
connected to magic.

As you  
may have  
assumed from  
**OUR** first  
meeting.

Things connected with  
magic are not necessarily  
motivated by what is, but  
what is likely to be.

# Hello, Edward Verres!

HOLY  
WHAT THE  
FLIP

YES. WELL.. YOU KNEW MY NAME  
BEFORE I INTRODUCED MYSELF

THAT WOULD  
STARTLE ANYONE.

Of course.

# We're going to be friends!

SO YOU CAN TELL THAT THE FLOW OF MAGIC IS GOING TO WIND UP CENTERED ON MOPERVILLE UNIVERSITY.

...BUT WHY IS UNCLEAR...

...AND POSSIBLY HASN'T HAPPENED.



Even with this geographic concern, however, magic will flow properly again...

...And the change in position will only result in **TWICE** as much Ambient Magic as before the clog!

ooo

On average, it was **TWENTY** times as much with the clog.

Everything is relative.

ESPECIALLY IN A PLACE THAT HAD MORE AMBIENT MAGIC THAN MOST PLACES EVEN BEFORE THE CLOG?



I see many answers without knowing how they were reached.

I am not intentionally cryptic. I just know less than one might assume.

TWICE



Yes. A minor difference.

HOW...  
IS TWICE MINOR...?



SO... YOU HAVE STORIES  
ABOUT STEVE. BUT NO  
CONFIRMATION OF STEVE?

Well, we  
don't call  
them  
"Steve",  
but yes.

Legends portray beings  
such as "Steve" as similar  
to the ancients in how they  
meddle in mortal affairs.

A big difference being that  
all the Crystalline Turtle Frog  
legends portray them as  
being helpful and empathetic.

Stories about  
**ANCIENTS?**  
More mixed.

And, on occasion, you  
just casually speak with  
one of these Crystalline  
Turtle Frogs?

I WOULDN'T SAY "CASUALLY"

**YOU CALL  
THEM STEVE.**

OKAY, YEAH,  
THAT'S.

PRETTY  
CASUAL. I  
GUESS..

I HAVE CAUSE  
TO SPEAK WITH  
MANY BEINGS LIKE  
STEVE. I'M PRETTY  
USED TO IT

No wonder  
you weren't  
intimidated  
by Liam.

Yean. Liam's  
strong, but  
not **STEVE-**  
strong.

...

What?

**WHAT'S ODD** is that things  
**JUST** seem to be returning  
to normal on our side.

You called them Steve  
too, you know.

There's even evidence  
that nothing has moved.

I DON'T THINK  
THE GEOGRAPHIC  
LOCATION OF  
WHERE MAGIC  
FLOWS ON OUR  
SIDE AFFECTS  
YOURS.

WE HAVE A  
SHARED REALITY,  
BUT FOR MOST  
INTENTS AND  
PURPOSES, OUR  
SIDES ARE  
SEPARATE  
UNIVERSES.

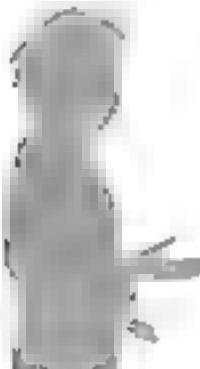
IT'S UNLIKELY WE HAVE IDENTICAL LANDSCAPES,  
OR EVEN IDENTICAL POSITIONS IN THE UNIVERSE.

GIVEN THAT SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES  
CLEARLY EXIST, IDENTICAL CELESTIAL  
POSITIONS FOR PLANETS ARE UNLIKELY

THE CENTER OF THE FLOW MOVING A FEW  
MILES ON OUR SIDE PROBABLY MEANS LITTLE.  
IF ANYTHING, TO THE POSITION OF ITS  
COUNTERPART ON YOUR SIDE

**OF COURSE!**  
That makes  
perfect sense.

IT DOES?  
It does?



SO THAT IS THE SITUATION. I DO NOT KNOW IF THE MOVING OF THE CENTER ON OUR SIDE WILL HAVE ANY IMPACT ON YOUR SIDE

THE LOCAL AREA ON OUR SIDE, HOWEVER, FACES PERMANENT CONSEQUENCES AS A RESULT OF THE CLOG CORRECTING ITSELF

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

That being you spoke to...

What did you call them?

I DIDN'T CALL THEM ANYTHING.

THEY'VE REFUSED TO GIVE ME ANYTHING THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED A NAME

With a name I have given, people who know how could summon me. It is best I choose who I speak with.

I NEED SOMETHING TO CALL YOU. WOULD "STEVE" BE OKAY?

Acceptable.

YEP THAT'S A MYTHICAL DEITY YOU WERE CHATTING WITH

It's probably rude to keep saying "mythical".

I guess there's nothing left for us to do but to wait and see if "Steve" was correct.

It... feels awkward to ask this after what happened...

...But given that this will take time to resolve, and we can't take for granted that things will just turn out as we expect, would it be possible to, um...

ARRANGE FUTURE MEETINGS?

I WOULD BE HAPPY TO

Yes. That.

You would?!

YES, AND NOT JUST TO ADDRESS THE CLOG.

OUR SIDES ARE CONNECTED, AND PEOPLE FROM EITHER SIDE MIGHT FIND THEIR WAY TO THE OTHER.

I THINK IT WOULD BE FOR THE BEST IF SOME DEGREE OF COMMUNICATION WERE MAINTAINED.

IF NOTHING ELSE, WE MIGHT LEARN SOMETHING FROM ONE ANOTHER.

I agree! That would be excellent!

A bit surprising you'd agree to it so readily after what happened...

I BEAR NO GRUDGE TOWARDS ANY OF YOU AND WHAT'S DONE IS DONE.

I'D LIKE US TO FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

SO COOL...

HM?

SERHEME NUTHIN'



MY OTHER  
QUESTION IS ABOUT  
HEALING MAGIC.

OUR SYSTEM  
OF MAGIC HASN'T  
PROV DED MUCH  
IN THE WAY OF  
HEALING

CHANGES MADE  
TO PEOPLE ARE  
MOSTLY TEMPORARY  
ENCHANTMENTS.  
WHICH COULD  
COMPLICATE  
HEALING MORE  
THAN HELP IT

Ah. Our healing magic isn't perfect. We can speed up healing, but it's strenuous for the patient. It can be dangerous.

It tends to involve stuffing stamina potions down people's throats.

And done in small amounts over time for anything major.

We can also mend wounds, but it's much more manual. Medical training is needed to safely do more than mend surface damage.

Complicated training. I can't do **SQUAT** for internal injury.

I CAN LEARN SPELLS BY OBSERVING THEM. WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO DEMONSTRATE THOSE SPELLS FOR ME?

Uh... We'd be happy to, but the first one puts strain on a person, and the second would require an actual injury to...

**Slice**

IS THIS CUT ON MY PALM SUFFICIENT?

WHAT THE HECK  
EVEN YES LET  
ME FIX THAT



I HAVE MEANS TO ARRANGE CONTACTING ONE ANOTHER AGAIN, BUT WE CAN DISCUSS THAT AS WE CONCLUDE THIS MEETING.

I WAS HOPING YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO ANSWER A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS FOR ME FIRST

Certainly! What would you like to know?

WHAT EXACTLY IS A "ROYAL" AURA?

Ah. A royal aura is a magic aura that looks like a crown.

I bet it's where they got the idea to connect it with royalty.



THAT'S IT? I THOUGHT IT'D BE A SUPER POWERFUL "BOW DOWN BEFORE ME" SORT OF AURA.

NANASE DOES HAVE THAT SORT OF VIBE TO HER.



Any **CONFIRMED** royalty is strong. A **WEAK** aura can't look like a crown.

Meaning some people only learn they're royalty after training, and **SOME** people born into luxury and power learn they're **NOT** royalty.



HM.



SO SARAH COULD BE A PRINCESS!

WHAT?

WHAT?



Lespuko: Large, three-tailed cousin of uryuoms. Uryuom hybrids (seyunolus) with uryuom plus lespuko have advanced power and shapeshifting



DID YOU JUST...

Yeah, and look at the faces on your kids over there.

THEY UM... LOOK CONCERNED...

EXACTLY.

You threw yourself headfirst into a charging Liam, and you just cut your palm in front of them like that?

You didn't even check with me first. What if I couldn't do any more healing today after Elliot?

**YOU  
MATTER.**

Value your own well-being more.

IF not for yourself, then for **THEM**.

NOW, I can do the speed-healing spell without you being injured, **OR** the spell hurting you, **BUT** it **WILL** make you tired.

If I did it to Elliot right now, it'd knock him out.

Are you **CERTAIN** you're up for it?

YES.

Okay.

Sorry about the wing slap.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT AND... THANK YOU

I DON'T  
GET IT (OW  
SHOULDN'T DO  
STUFF WITH MY  
HANDS.)

TEDD'S DAD JUMPED IN  
LIAM'S PATH TO SELFLESSLY  
PROTECT US.

WAS THAT NOT "FOR US"?



AND HE ONLY  
HURT HIMSELF TO  
LEARN MAGIC THAT  
COULD SAVE LIVES  
IN THE FUTURE

MAYBE HE WAS  
A LITTLE HASTY  
ABOUT HOW HE  
WENT ABOUT  
GETTING THE  
HEALING MAGIC,  
BUT

WEREN'T  
THOSE ALL  
THINGS A  
HERO  
SHOULD  
DO?

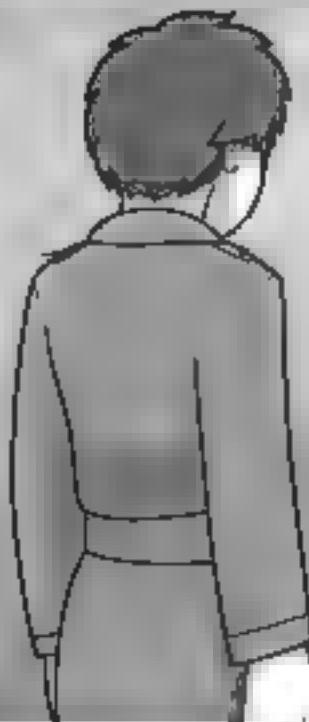
Time passed as Tara  
instructed Edward on,  
and demonstrated, the  
second healing spell

Eliot continued  
to ponder, Andrea  
continued to ask  
potential y rude  
questions.,

Can you  
go full  
kyruom?

NO, AND I'M NOT SURE WHY?

My understanding is  
that seyuniolu can't for  
some reason, but I  
thought maybe you...



And trespassers from the other  
side of real ty rushed through the  
forest w th unwavering reso ve

CAN WE STOP YET?!

Mostly  
unwavering  
resolve

SERIOUSLY..  
I NEED..  
A BREAK! /

TO THINK YOU WOULD  
BE THE ONE TO TIRE  
FROM RUNNING FIRST

I DON'T  
HAVE...

FOUR LEGS  
RIGHT NOW,  
AND WE'RE  
IN...

A FOREST!

LOWER YOUR  
VOICE. SOMEONE  
MIGHT HEAR.

OUT... OUT HERE?  
AND AFTER ALL  
THE RUNNING?

UNLIKELY, BUT POSSIBLE.  
STILL, LET US TAKE A BREAK.

FINALLY!

ARE YOU SURE  
ABOUT THIS?

YES. IT WON'T DO TO EXHAUST  
OURSELVES, AND WE SHOULD CONFIRM  
THAT WE CAN ACTUALLY USE EVERY-  
THING WE BROUGHT WITH US HERE.

I REALLY... HOPE YOU  
CAN... I DON'T WANT  
TO DO ALL THE MAGIC,  
OR TRY TO RULE  
ANYTHING.

TRUST ME, NOBODY  
WANTS YOU RULING  
ANYTHING.

THANK YOU. THAT'S  
REASSURING

IF THIS  
WORKS, AND  
WE ARE SEEN,  
REMEMBER:

HERE,  
TECHNOLOGY  
IS THE SAFE  
EXCUSE

VWM

IT APPEARS  
MAGIC IS  
AVAILABLE  
TO US.



With somewhat awkward goodbyes said, and expectations of seeing each other again at some undetermined point in the future, the two groups parted ways



It's a shame we don't have more royalty like that guy.

You mean the man you wing-slapped?

He clearly cares about others, doesn't seem to care about differences in species, regularly talks to deities like it's no big deal, and is willing to put himself on the line to help others.

I still can't believe you did that.

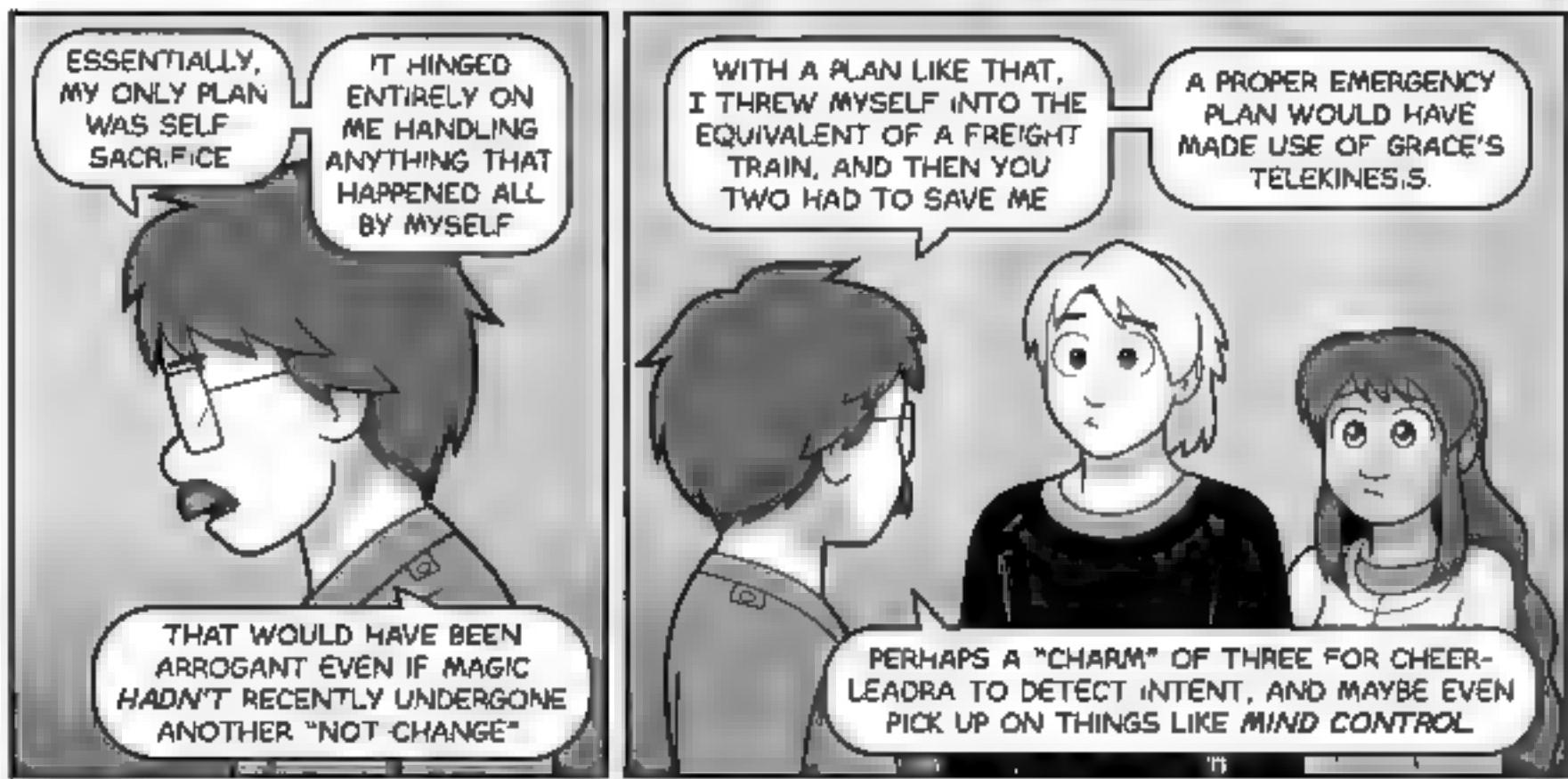
He'd need guidance from others to balance him out, but there's not a leader alive who doesn't need that.

You're not planning to steal him away and become his right hand, are you?

Of course I'm not!

He cares too much about people here. He can't be a good leader on our side if he's spending all his time trying to get back here.

I was joking.



It's difficult to know how long someone who has "burnt out" on magic will remain burnt out

In addition to lacking magic, someone who is burnt out will have a changed hair color.

As such, Edward wanted to take Eliot back to his home in order to provide Eliot with a magic wand for restoring his hair color

This wand would be easy to create, as a magic watch had already been made for Ellen after her "natural" hair color became green (for definitely NOT dragon-related reasons).

Edward also wanted to help along the internal healing of Eliot's hands, which Tara said could be safely done shortly after Eliot ate a big meal.

GRACE, ORDER ENOUGH PIZZA TO FEED TWO NANASES.

AND GET BROWNIES.

Tedd, who had naturally worried a little in spite of being confident that everything would go well

YOUR HAIR...!  
WHY IS...?!

Was a BIT startled

The events of earlier that evening were explained to Tedd in the basement while Edward waited upstairs for the pizza

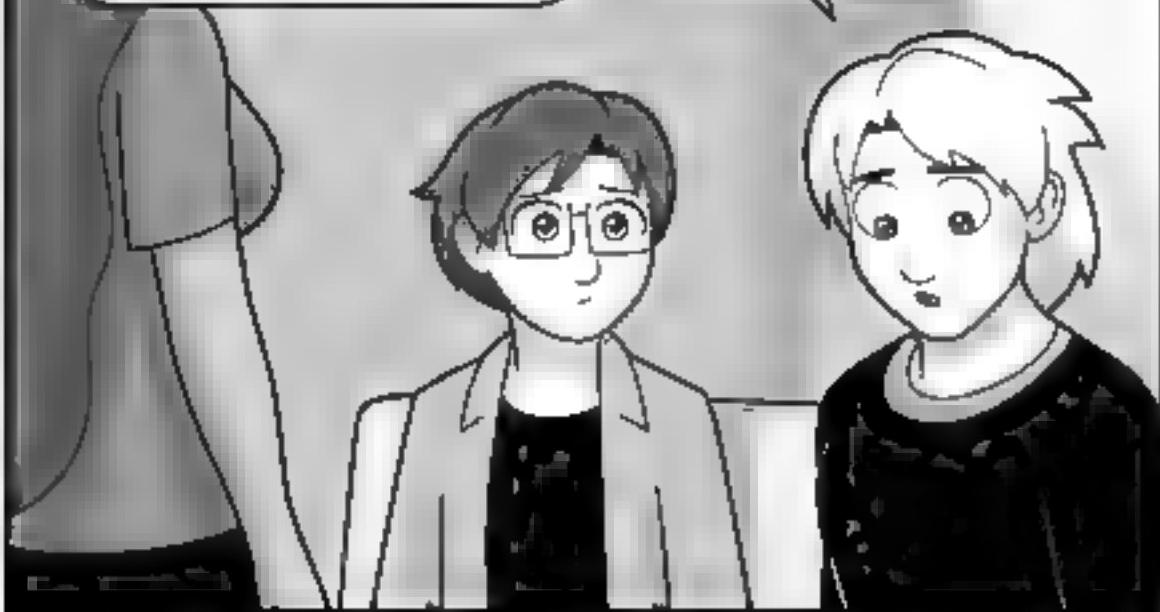
And called Eliot's parents to let them know what happened

#%&@!

I'M NOT SURE THE VILLAIN VERSION OF CHEERLEADRA PUT ANY NEW THOUGHTS IN MY HEAD.

I WAS SO SCARED AND ANGRY ABOUT WHAT I JUST SAW HAPPEN TO YOUR DAD, AND WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN TO HIM AND GRACE, THAT I...

I THINK EVERYTHING I THOUGHT WERE THINGS I WOULD'VE THOUGHT ANYWAY



I THINK THE DIFFERENCE IS I DIDN'T SECOND-GUESS ANY OF IT

I STILL WOULD'VE THOUGHT ALL THOSE THINGS. I JUST WOULD'VE THOUGHT MORE ABOUT THEM.

COULD BE FAKING

MAYBE DID KILL TEDD'S DAD

ONE LAST ATTACK

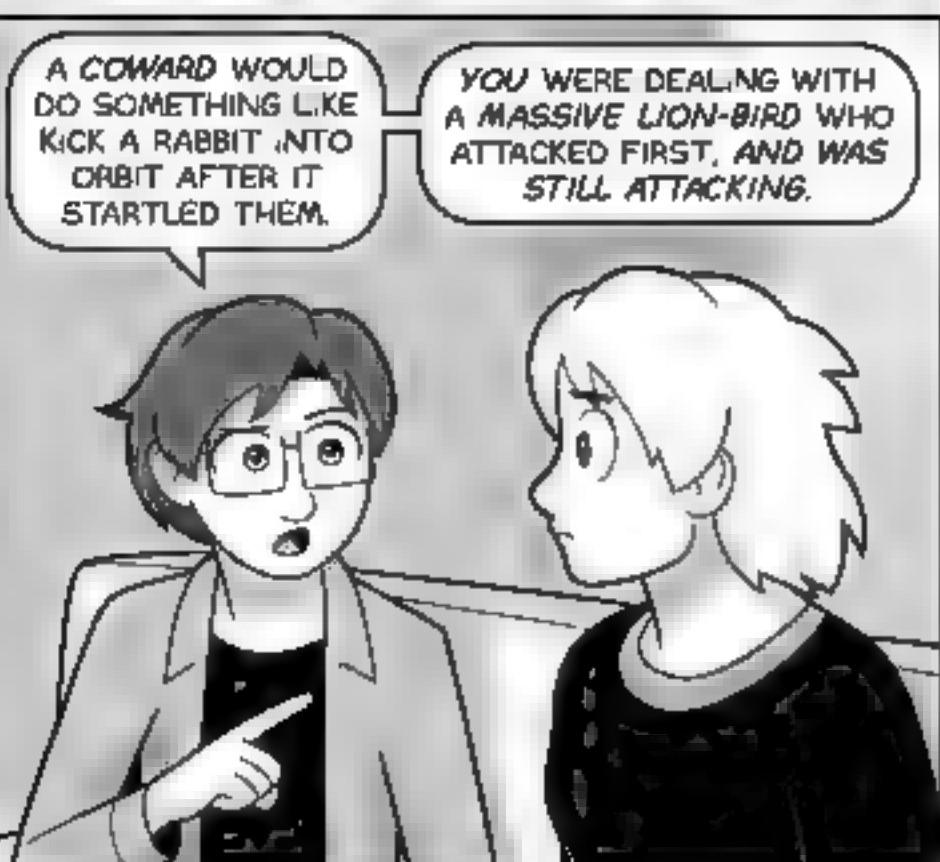
FINISH IT

I DIDN'T QUESTION THEM.

AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I EXPECTED.

JUST ME, BUT WITHOUT AN ANGEL ON MY SHOULDER.

BUT I DID IT ANYWAY, BECAUSE I WAS ANGRY AND SCARED, AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO.



BETTER OPTIONS  
FOR THE FUTURE...



LIKE PUNCHING WITH WORDS!

AND TEAMWORK!

PUNCHING WORDS?



COMPLETELY AVOID  
FIGHTING, OR FIGHT  
WITH A COMBINED  
STRENGTH!

IF I'M NOT TRYING TO DO  
EVERYTHING THEN I CAN FOCUS  
ON DOING A COUPLE HELPFUL  
THINGS AS WELL AS POSSIBLE!



LIKE IF YOUR DAD HADN'T  
BEEN (SORT OF) KNOCKED  
OUT, I COULD HAVE...

UH...

MAYBE

UH...



ALL I CAN THINK OF  
WOULD'VE BEEN KEEPING  
LIAM DISTRACTED BY  
FLYING AROUND HIM LIKE  
AN ANNOYING FLY?

WHICH  
I'M NOT SURE  
I COULD DO  
WELL ENOUGH  
TO MATTER  
FOR LONG.

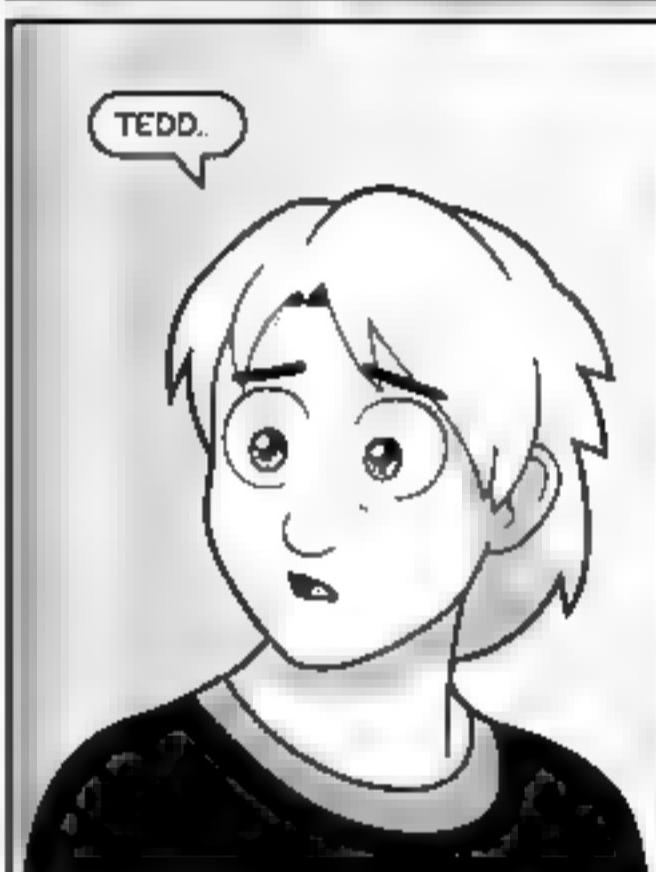
I PROBABLY  
WOULD'VE  
JUST GOTTEN  
SWATTED LIKE  
A BUG.

I REALLY  
NEED TO FIGURE  
OUT HOW TO  
TRAIN AS.

CHEERLEADERA.



TEDD YOU  
OKAY?!



Next Story Comic - Wednesday Sep 7th  
Next EGSNP (after Saturday) - Thursday Sep 8th

IT'S... NOT JUST THAT I USED THE VILLAIN FORM.

IT'S THAT PART OF ME WANTED TO USE IT BEFORE THERE WAS A PROBLEM.

WE WERE MEETING FOR A FRIENDLY CHAT BUT I WAS AFRAID OF NOT BEING ABLE TO PROTECT ANYONE.

...AND OF SOMEONE GETTING HURT WHILE PROTECTING ME

THE HUGE COINCIDENCE THAT SOMETHING ACTUALLY HAPPENED, AND THE FORM WAS USEFUL, DOESN'T JUSTIFY HOW I FELT

BUT YOU HAD A SCARY EXPERIENCE WITH TARA. SO BEING AFRAID WAS UNDERSTANDABLE!

AND USING THE VILLAIN FORM TURNED OUT TO BE THE RIGHT THING TO DO UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, RIGHT?

SO IT WAS GOOD!

RIGHT, TEDD?

NO, IT WAS BAD.

THERE WEREN'T ANY GOOD OPTIONS.

THE VILLAIN FORM WAS A BAD OPTION.

BUT IT WAS ALSO THE RIGHT CHOICE

WE'LL LEARN FROM TONIGHT, AND FIGURE OUT BETTER OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

IN THE MEANTIME DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF

**TEDD?!**

A little bit later

I WISH I COULD'VE TALKED TO VIRGINIA SOME MORE

THE ONLY OTHER SEYUNOLUS I GET TO TALK TO ARE MY SIBLINGS OVER THE INTERNET, AND I NEVER EVER TALK TO ANY URYUOMS.

I KNOW I HAVE A LOT OF FRIENDS.

...BUT THERE'S STILL SOME THING ISOLATING ABOUT THAT.

YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE PLENTY OF CHANCES TO TALK TO URYUOMS, GRACE.

I AM? HOW?

ARE SOME GOING TO THE SAME COLLEGE NEXT YEAR?

NOW THERE'S SOME-THING TO CHECK

POSSIBLY, BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M REFERRING TO.

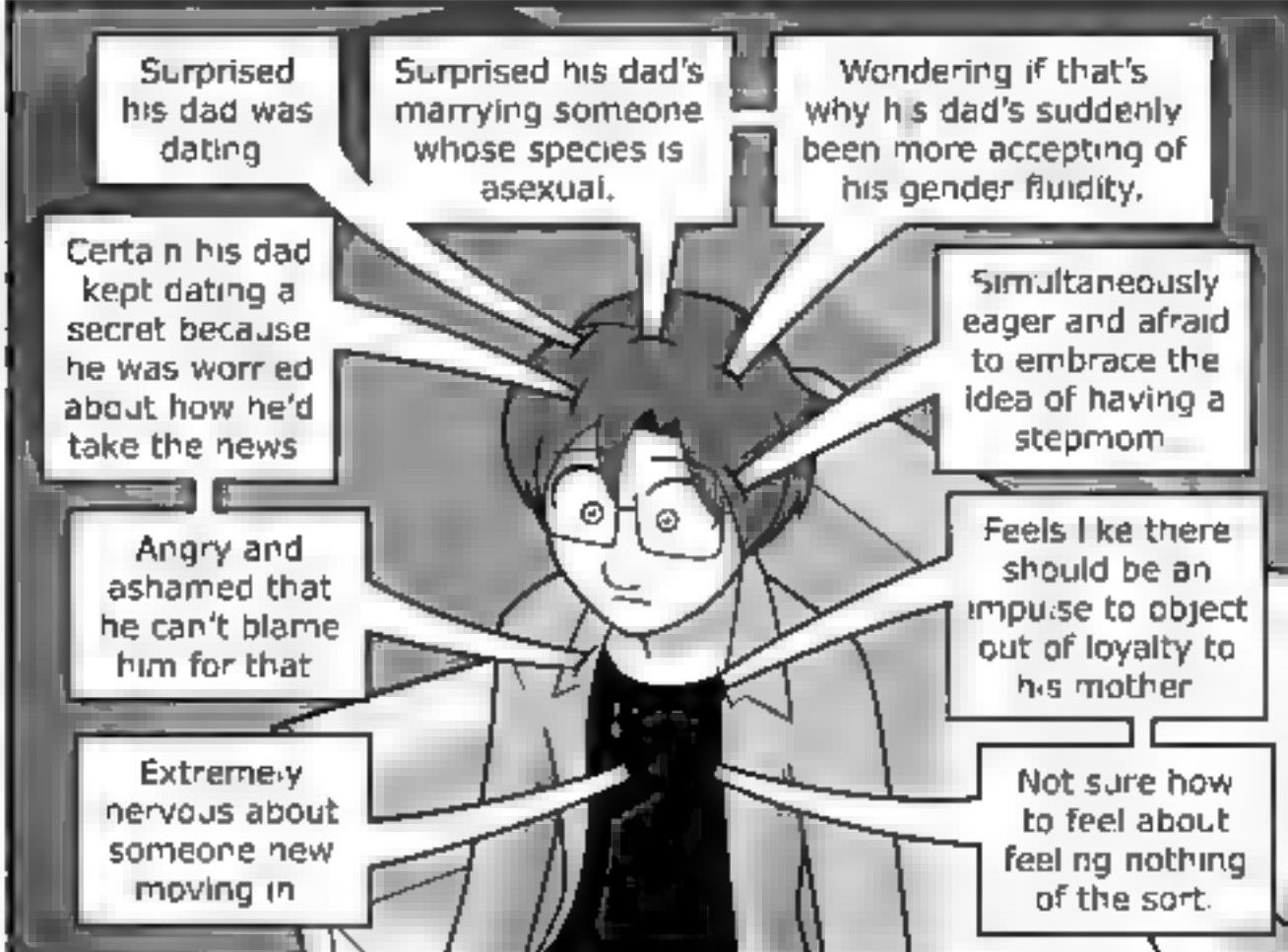
TEDD  
GRACE...

LAST WEEKEND, I PROPOSED TO MY GIRLFRIEND, LAVENDER.

SHE'S AN URYUOM, AND SHE'S MOVING IN.



**CONGRATULATIONS!**





WHAT I MEANT WAS, WELL...

TEDD AND GRACE START COLLEGE NEXT YEAR.

MOPERVILLE UNIVERSITY ISN'T THAT FAR AWAY BUT WITH THEM BUSY WITH COLLEGE, AND STAYING IN THE DORMS...

IT'D BE HARDER FOR EVERYONE TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER AS A FAMILY, RIGHT?



THAT'S TRUE. I WANTED TIME FOR TEDD AND GRACE TO GET TO KNOW LAVENDER BEFORE COLLEGE.

I WANT EVERYONE TO FEEL LIKE SHE'S PART OF THE FAMILY.

I SHOULD HAVE SAID I WAS DATING BEFORE I PROPOSED, AND I WAS THINKING ABOUT WHEN I SHOULD DO THAT, BUT...

WHEN I WAS WITH HER LAST WEEK, I THOUGHT ABOUT THE FUTURE, AND HOW EMPTY THE HOUSE WAS GOING TO FEEL...



...AND HOW MUCH I LOVED HER, AND WANTED HER TO BE PART OF THIS FAMILY.

AND BEFORE I KNEW IT, I'D PROPOSED, AND ASKED HER TO MOVE IN WITH US.

AND I'D DO IT AGAIN, BUT PREFERABLY AFTER INTRODUCING HER TO...



IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BEST IF  
YOU'D INTRODUCED US FIRST...

BUT I CAN COMPLETELY  
UNDERSTAND YOUR ACTING  
ON IMPULSE THERE



THANK  
YOU, I... WAIT  
YOU HAVEN'T DONE  
THAT HAVE YOU?

**IMPULSE HUG!**



**WORD  
PUNNING!**



SERIOUSLY

YOU TWO  
AREN'T  
ENGAGED,  
RIGHT?

OH, RIGHT UM,  
THE WHOLE REASON  
I CAME DOWN HERE  
IS BECAUSE THE  
PIZZA'S HERE

GASP!

PRECIOUS  
PIZZA HEAT!

The pizza heat was fine, for  
Edward had put the boxes  
into an insulated pizza bag

Because of  
course he would  
do something  
like that.

He'd previously  
purchased it  
knowing ful. well  
that any manner  
of nonsense in  
this house could  
delay eating  
delivered food

Also, it  
preserved the  
heat of pick  
up orders.

This did not mean there weren't  
other problems to overcome

IT'S GOING TO BE A PAIN TO EAT  
WITH YOUR HANDS SORE, ISN'T IT

HERE LET ME  
HELP YOU.



sNOT!

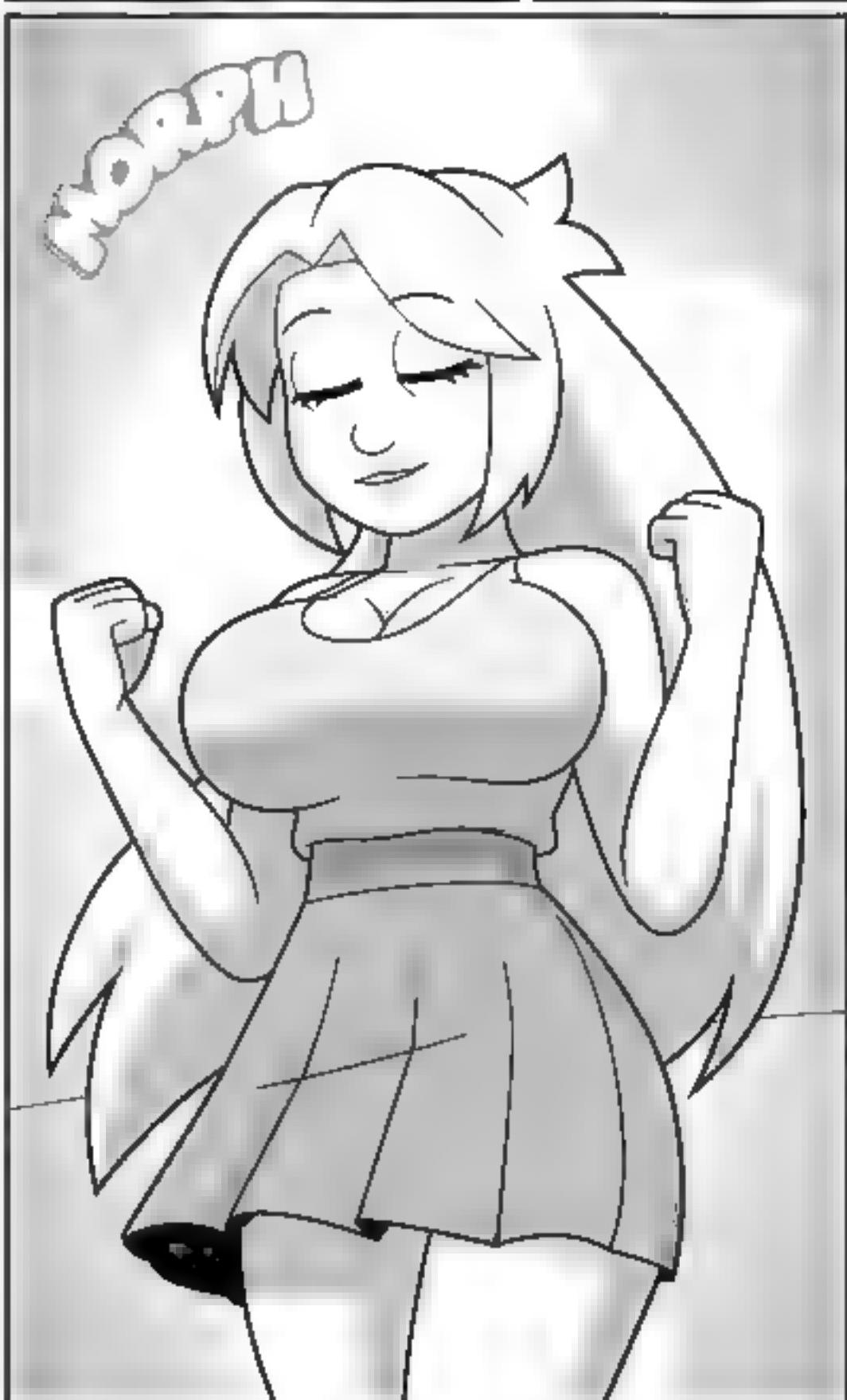


THEY'RE NOT  
ENGAGED, RIGHT?



After eating pizza...





**THUMP**



Elliot was fine, but criticized severely for standing up and using magic right after being healed by a spell that predictably results in fatigue.

No one was more critical of Elliot in this moment than Tedd, who was very much aware that they'd just recklessly endangered their own well-being right in front of Tedd.

PATHETIC. O\_o

On the plus side, Elliot's hands felt a lot better

And the brownie was good

Tedd was pretty sure he'd be able to copy the healing spell into wands after observing it used more, but the spell felt notably different from what Tedd was used to

Elliot, exhausted, wound up spending the night, and was offered Tedd's bed to sleep in. He accepted

Tedd allegedly slept alone on a sofa



He wasn't sure if this was because the spell was from another system of magic, a type of spell he wasn't used to, or both.



Edward had his own suspicions about where Tedd actually slept.

Edward was quick to write up a report of the incident with the griffins, which Arthur read on Monday. This report minimized details about Grace's power, and left out her preventing "villain" Elliot from killing Lord Tyrantslayer



Arthur saw through this.



ONLY THOSE OF URYUOM DESCENT COULD MAKE THIS JOURNEY ANYONE VULNERABLE TO LIE DETECTION HAD TO BE EXCLUDED.

THIS SEVERELY LIMITS OUR OPTIONS FOR CONFIRMING WHO DOES, OR DOES NOT, HAVE AN AURA OF ROYALTY

THE ONLY CONFIRMATION WE CAN GET IS THROUGH PEOPLE'S DREAMS, AND WE'RE LUCKY TO EVEN HAVE THAT

WITHOUT THE ABILITIES ONE OF US INHERITED, WE WOULD HAVE NOTHING.

BUT THE ROYALTY ON THIS SIDE OF THE WORLD ARE NOT AS WELL HIDDEN AS ONE MIGHT EXPECT.

THEY ARE SIMPLY NOT KNOWN FOR WHAT THEY ARE.

ANYONE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE, STRENGTH, AND HERITAGE TO HAVE A ROYAL AURA WILL BE IN A POSITION OF POWER.

ROYALTY NOT IN TITLE, BUT IN SOCIAL STATUS AND WEALTH.

TYRANTS WHO CONTROL FROM THE SHADOWS. ARGUABLY WORSE THAN THE ROYALTY ON OUR SIDE.

THAT IS HOW WE CAN FIND THEM. BY INVESTIGATING THE RICH AND POWERFUL.

MADE ALL THE EASIER BY THEM NOT OPENLY RULING ON THIS SIDE.

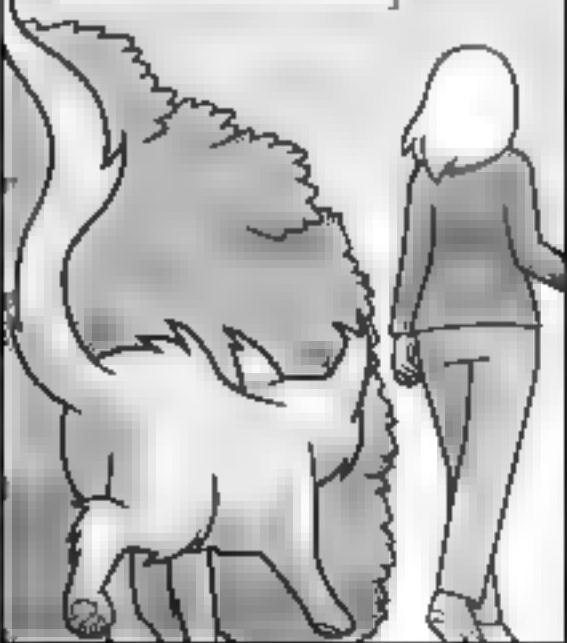


AND EVEN IF WE DO NOT FIND A TYRANT WITH AN AURA OF ROYALTY SO EASILY...

...WE MIGHT FIND SOMEONE WITH AN ABILITY WE CAN USE TO FIND THEM.

WHATEVER PATH LIES AHEAD, IT ENDS WITH ME TAKING AN AURA OF ROYALTY...

...AND BECOMING A VOICE FOR MY PEOPLE THAT CANNOT BE IGNORED.

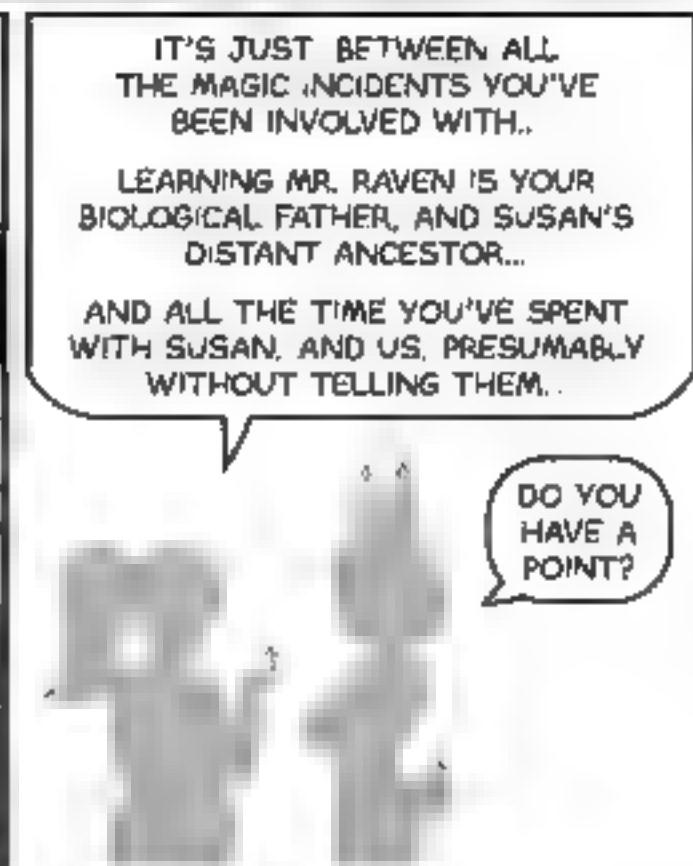


**Balance THE END**

**Story comics will return Weds, October 19th**  
(EGSNP comics still Tues-Thurs-Saturday)

Brother

Over a week ago, the party with Ashley.





WELL, LUCY, IT TURNS OUT OUR JUNIOR YEAR HISTORY TEACHER IS MY BIOLOGICAL FATHER AND A REALLY LONG-LIVED HALF-IMMORTAL, AND I'M WORRIED ABOUT RUNNING INTO HIM.

OH! I SEE!

NO

SERIOUSLY, WHAT'S GOING ON?

IS AN EX BOYFRIEND GIVING YOU TROUBLE?

=SHUDDER=

IS THAT A YES?

NO NO NO

I'M JUST UM.

PRACTICING MY STEALTH.

PRACTICING YOUR STEALTH.

YEAH, I... USED TO SNEAK AROUND A LOT

I DON'T REALLY NEED TO NOW BUT IT'S A SKILL SO...

Y KNOW

SNEAK PRACTICE

NOTHING THERE NOW

=SNICKER=

MUST'VE BEEN THE WIND

HEH HEH HEH

FINE DON'T TELL ME.



LUCY...

LATER.



OOF SPEECH  
CHECK FAILED.

YOU HATE  
TO SEE IT



GRAR!

INTIMIDATION  
CHECK PASSED!

SPEECH  
INCREASED  
ALSO RUN!



DAMMIT  
NANASE WAS  
RIGHT

ALL THIS SECRECY  
IS ADDING UP

I'LL  
INTRODUCE  
LUCY AND  
RHODA TO  
SUSAN.

THAT'LL  
SIMPLIFY  
THINGS A  
LITTLE. AND  
THERE ARE  
WAYS TO  
EXPLAIN  
HER.

BUT I NEED TO  
DEAL WITH THIS  
PROBLEM FIRST

"GRAR"?

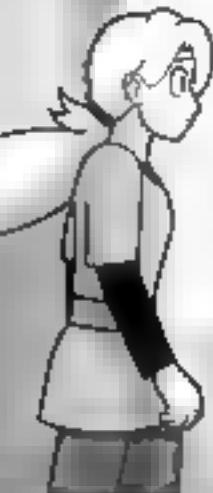
I NEED TO GET  
MY FIRST TALK WITH  
RAVEN SINCE THE  
MALL OVER WITH.

I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I'M GOING TO SAY TO HIM.

"HI, I WANT TO GET THIS ENCOUNTER OVER WITH SO I'M NOT WORRIED ABOUT IT HAPPENING AT RANDOM, PLEASE DON'T TALK TO ME. THANKS!"

I NEVER CARED ABOUT MEETING MY BIOLOGICAL PARENTS. I KNOW WHO MY REAL FAMILY IS.

THE ONLY TIME I BRIEFLY CARED WAS RIGHT AFTER I FOUND OUT I WAS ADOPTED.



AND I ONLY CARED ABOUT MEETING SUSAN BECAUSE SERIOUSLY, A POSSIBLE TWIN?

YOU LOOK INTO A POSSIBLE TWIN.

I GUESS THERE MIGHT BE STUFF I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT, LIKE...

IF HE'S "HALF-IMMORTAL" AND I'M HIS DAUGHTER, DOES THAT MAKE ME...

NOT HUMAN?

DOES THAT MATTER? WILL IT AFFECT MY KIDS SOMEDAY? SUSAN'S A DISTANT DESCENDENT OF RAVEN, SO IT SHOULD BE FINE BUT...



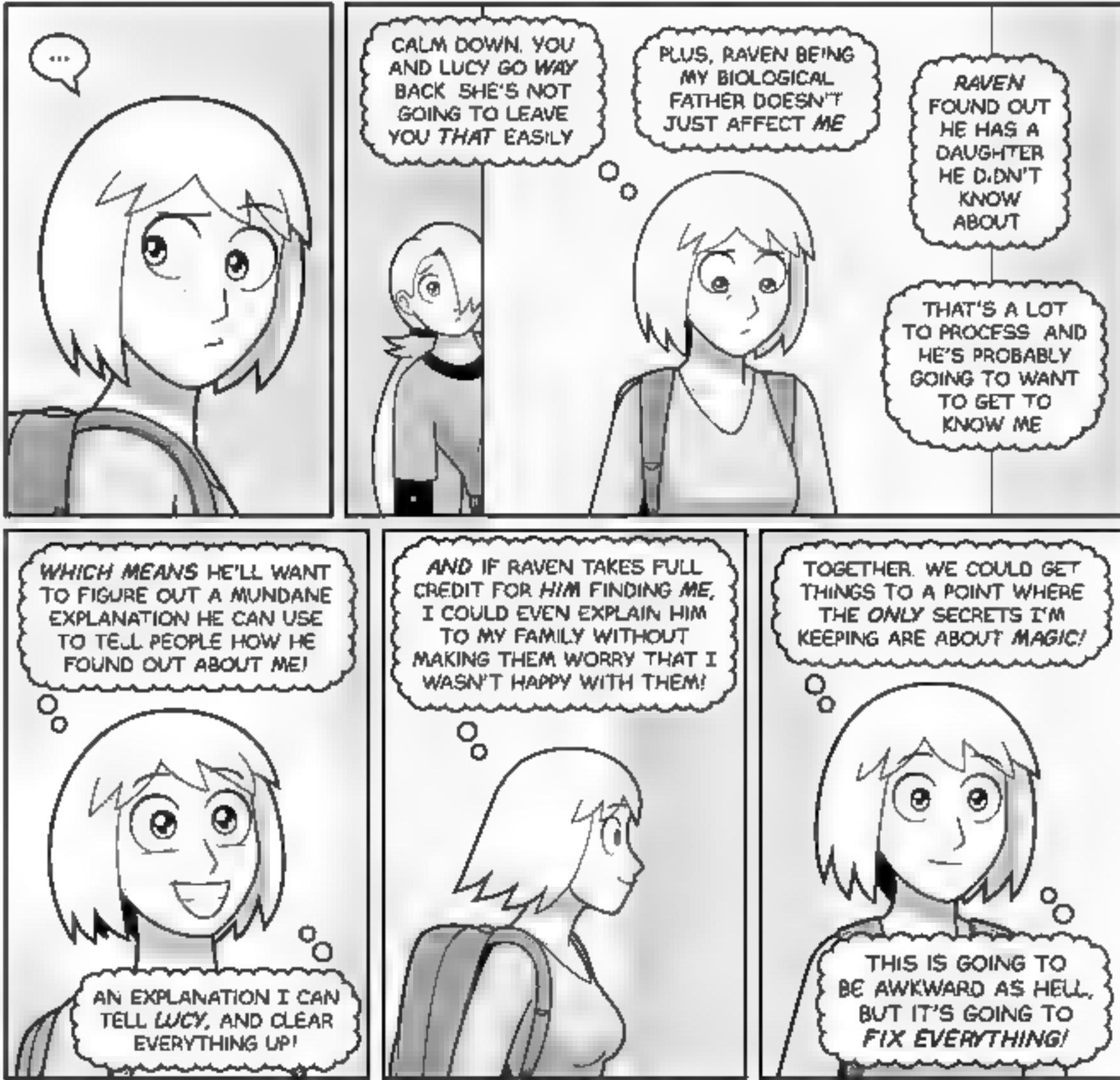
ARE WE GOING TO BE TOGETHER LONG ENOUGH FOR THAT TO MATTER?

ARE WE EVEN GOING TO STILL BE TOGETHER AT THE END OF TODAY?

HAVE I ALREADY RUINED EVERYTHING?

?





## CHAPTER 14



HE RETIRED?!

WHEN?!

A-A  
COUPLE  
WEEKS  
AGO?

I DON'T KNOW WHY HE  
RETIRED IN THE MIDDLE OF  
THE YEAR, BUT I'M SURE HE  
HAD A GOOD REASON?

IT'S ALSO MY  
UNDERSTANDING THAT  
HE'LL HUNT ME DOWN  
IF I DON'T LIVE UP TO  
HIS STANDARDS OF  
TEACHING HISTORY

BUT THAT HAD TO  
BE A JOKE RIGHT?

RRAAAUGH!

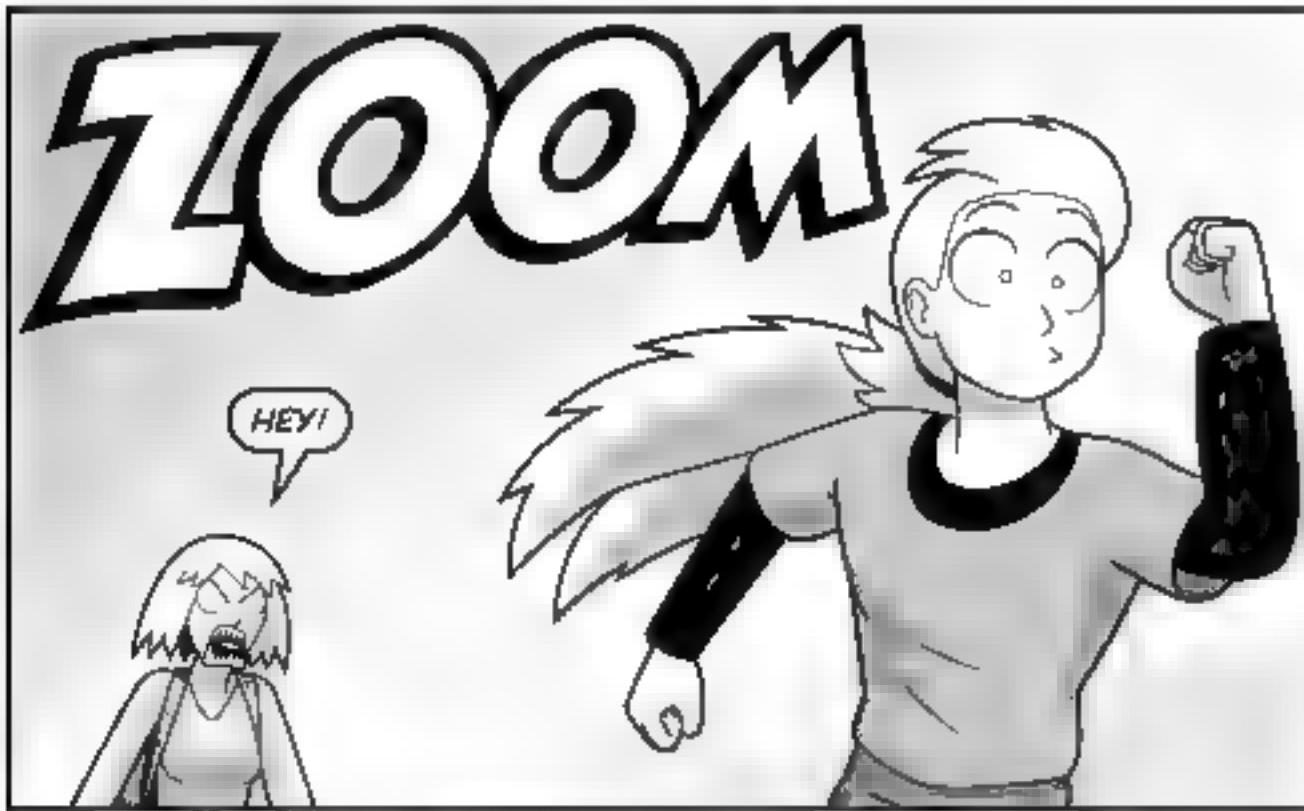
WAIT!

DO YOU  
THINK THAT  
WASN'T A  
JOKE?!

GRRR

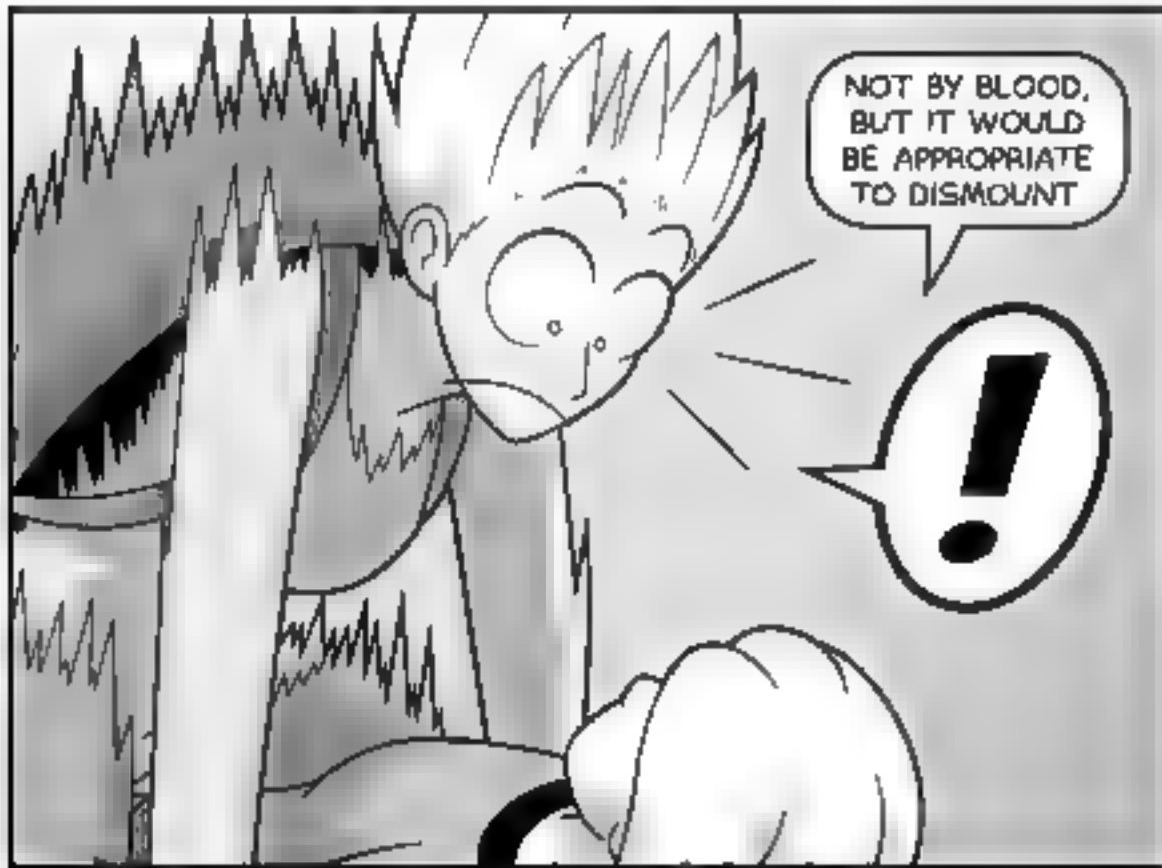
WHEOSH

STALKER!



UH  
W  
H  
M  
P





I WAS TRYING TO  
FIND YOU, AND SAW  
YOU ON TOP OF HIM!  
IS HE THE EX YOU'VE  
BEEN AVOIDING?!

-SHUDDER-

DOES  
SHUDDERING  
MEAN YES?!

BLUSH

NO, NO  
HE'S NOT AN  
EX, HE'S...

HE'S...



HE'S WHAT?

HOW DO  
I EXPLAIN  
THIS?!

YOU THINK YOU ARE  
PROTECTING HER.

PROTECTING  
YOURSELF

WHAT  
ARE YOU ..



THE GLOWING WOMAN  
AT THE MALL TOLD DIANE  
WHO HER FATHER IS.

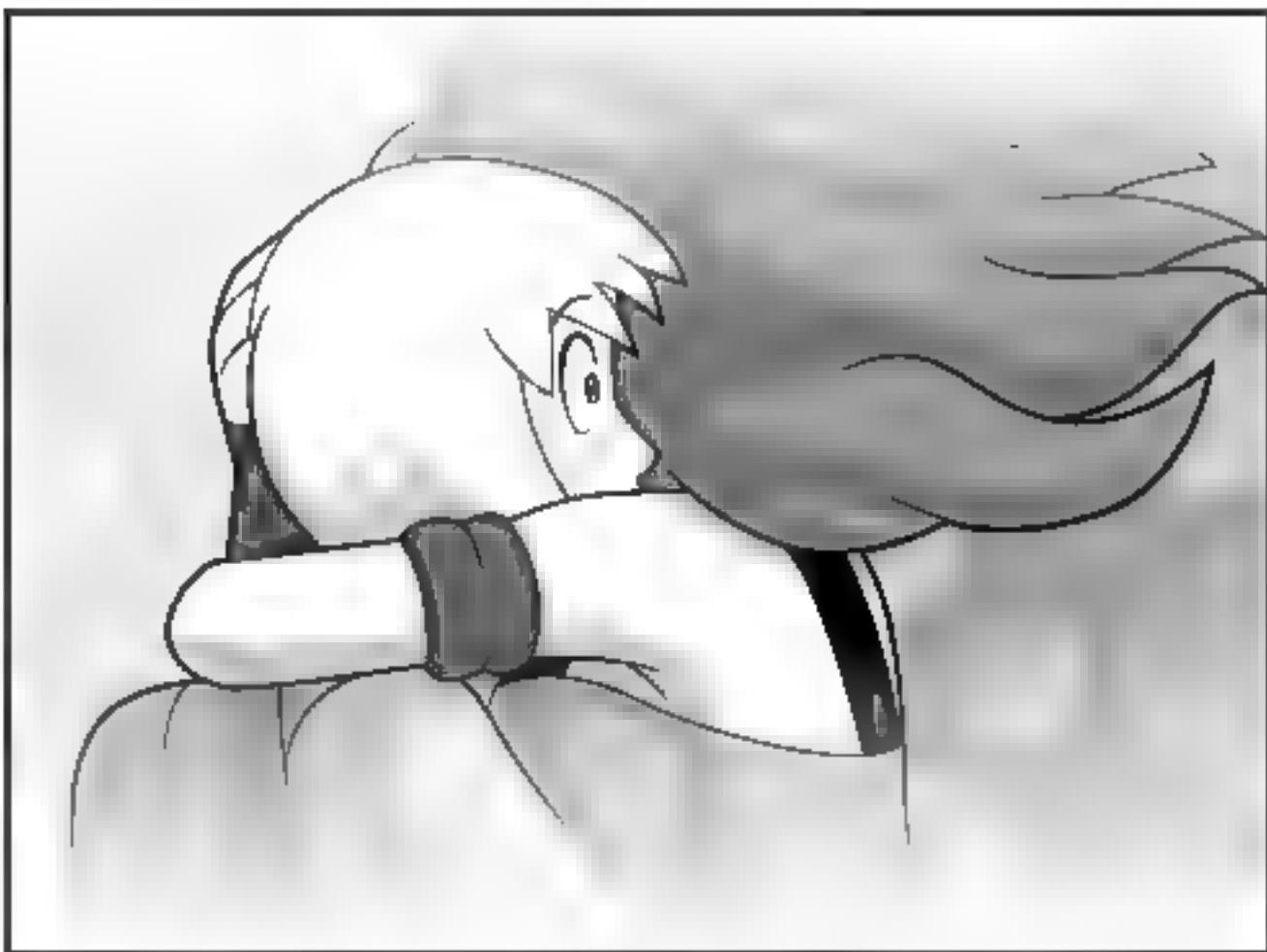
HE WAS A  
TEACHER HERE

SHE  
HAS BEEN  
AVOIDING  
HIM.





LUCY I



I'M SORRY,  
DIANE.

I KNEW SOMETHING WAS  
WRONG. AND I DIDN'T UNDER-  
STAND WHY YOU WOULDN'T  
TELL ME ANYTHING

I SHOULD'VE  
GIVEN YOU  
MORE SPACE.

NO NO.  
I'M SORRY I  
SHOULD'VE  
SAID MORE  
THAN. UM.

LIES. LOTS  
AND LOTS OF  
OBVIOUS LIES.

I-I'M  
SURPRISED  
YOU BELIEVED  
HIM SO  
QUICKLY!

YOUR  
REACTION  
SAID IT ALL.  
HE'S YOUR  
BROTHER?

ADOPTED BROTHER. SORT OF  
HE... HE WAS ADOPTED BY...

MR RAVEN.

YOUR FATHER'S THAT  
TEACHER WHO LEFT  
OUT OF NOWHERE A  
COUPLE WEEKS AGO?

AM I THE ONLY  
PERSON WHO DIDN'T  
KNOW HE'D LEFT?!

MAYBE?



EVERYONE  
MAKES FUN  
OF ME! THEY  
CALL ME A  
GIRL!

AN ASSUMPTION OF A GENDER PRESENTATION  
BINARY IS A COMMON FLAW AMONG HUMANS, AS  
ARE ASSUMPTIONS OF DICHOTOMY IN GENERAL.

YOU ARE YOU, AND YOU ARE GOOD!

IT IS THEIR  
SIMPLISTIC  
PERCEPTION  
THAT IS THE  
PROBLEM!



THE PROBLEM IS  
THEY THINK THESE  
ARE A PONYTAIL!

CAN'T I JUST SAY  
WHAT THEY ARE?



THEN I COULD TELL  
THEM ABOUT SENSING  
THEM, AND WHY I  
DON'T LIKE CROWDS,  
AND HOW...

LOUD  
EVERYTHING  
IS!



I KNOW THIS IS  
DIFFICULT, NOAH,  
BUT IT IS VERY  
VERY IMPORTANT  
EVERYONE  
BELIEVE YOUR  
ANTENNAE ARE  
A PONYTAIL.

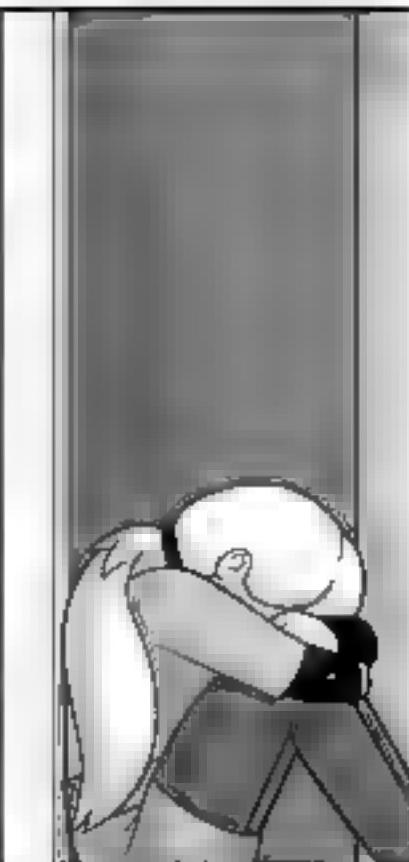
FOR NOW,  
THIS SECRET  
PROTECTS  
YOU

IT  
PROTECTS  
US!

BUT IT WON'T BE NECESSARY  
FOREVER. THE DAY THAT WAS  
FORETOLD WILL COME.

WE'RE MAKING SURE OF IT

WE WILL ALL BE LIBERATED  
BY THE MASTER OF FIRE



NOAH.

IF TELLING LUCY THAT STUFF WAS BECAUSE OF HIS OWN ISSUES...

...AND BASED ON "I HAVE FREED YOU BOTH." I'M GUESSING IT WAS.

...HE'S BEEN HURT BY SECRETS BEFORE

GIVEN THAT HE'S THE ADOPTED SON OF A MAGIC HALF-IMMORTAL, THERE'S A WHOLE MESS OF POSSIBILITIES THERE.

AND HIS. I GUESS OUR GRANDMOTHER SORT OF... DIED RECENTLY

RIGHT IN FRONT OF MR. RAVEN'S EYES...

THEN SHORTLY AFTER THAT, MR. RAVEN LEFT, AND NOAH PROMISED NOT TO TALK ABOUT IT WITH ANYONE BUT ME, AND ONLY IF I WAS LOOKING FOR MR. RAVEN. SO...

HAS NOAH HAD NO ONE TO TALK TO ABOUT SERIOUS STUFF FOR A COUPLE WEEKS?

IS HE LIVING ALL ALONE RIGHT NOW? IS HE EVEN OLD ENOUGH FOR THAT?

WHAT THE HELL BIO-DAD?

I KNOW YOU LOST YOUR MOM AND ARE PROBABLY DEALING WITH ALL SORTS OF STUFF

...BUT YOU JUST DITCH YOUR SON, AND YOU DON'T TALK TO YOUR DAUGHTER AT ALL BEFORE LEAVING TOWN?!

I SHOULD'VE GIVEN YOU MORE SPACE

OKAY! YEAH! SPACE WAS GOOD TO START WITH! I NEEDED SPACE!

BUT YOU SAY SOMETHING BEFORE LEAVING TOWN!

IT'S IMPORTANT TO  
TALK TO NOAH AGAIN.  
I NEED TO ASK ABOUT  
RAVEN, MAKE SURE  
HE'S OKAY—

YELL AT  
HIM FOR  
BLABBING!

HE HAD NO  
BUSINESS  
TELLING LUCY  
ANYTHING!

HE KNOWS  
HOW TO COOK  
RIGHT? HE'S  
EATING WELL?

OF COURSE  
HE'S EATING  
WELL! HE RAN  
LIKE A WEASEL-  
CHICKEN!

WHICH DON'T  
EXIST, BUT IF  
THEY DID, THEY'D  
BE FAST!

ANGER ANGER ANGER  
HANG ON TO ANGER!

YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHEN YOU'LL  
SEE HIM AGAIN, AND YOU WANT TO BE  
**ANGRY WHEN YOU DO!**

ARE YOU EATING WELL?!

WHY WOULD I  
NOT BE EATING  
WELL?

BECAUSE  
YOUR DAD'S  
OUT OF  
TOWN!

HE IS, BUT I  
AM PERFECTLY  
CAPABLE OF—

COOKING?  
SHOPPING?  
TAKING CARE OF  
THE HOUSE?  
**BILLS?!**



ARE YOU EVEN OLD ENOUGH  
TO BE LEFT ALONE?!

I AM EIGHTEEN!

WHEN'S YOUR  
BIRTHDAY?!

FEBRUARY?!

At least  
one month  
older.



**BIG SISTER MODE:  
100%**

WE SHOULD  
TALK AT YOUR  
HOUSE AFTER  
SCHOOL

UM... I WAS  
ACTUALLY GOING  
TO SUGGEST  
THAT, BUT...

MY INTENT WAS  
TO TALK ABOUT YOU-  
KNOW-WHAT...

BUT I GET THE IMPRESSION  
YOU JUST WANT TO ASSESS  
MY LIVING SITUATION...?



I CAN DO TWO THINGS! THREE! UNLESS  
YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING GOOD PLANNED,  
I'M COOKING A **HEALTHY DINNER!**

I... BUT... WHY?

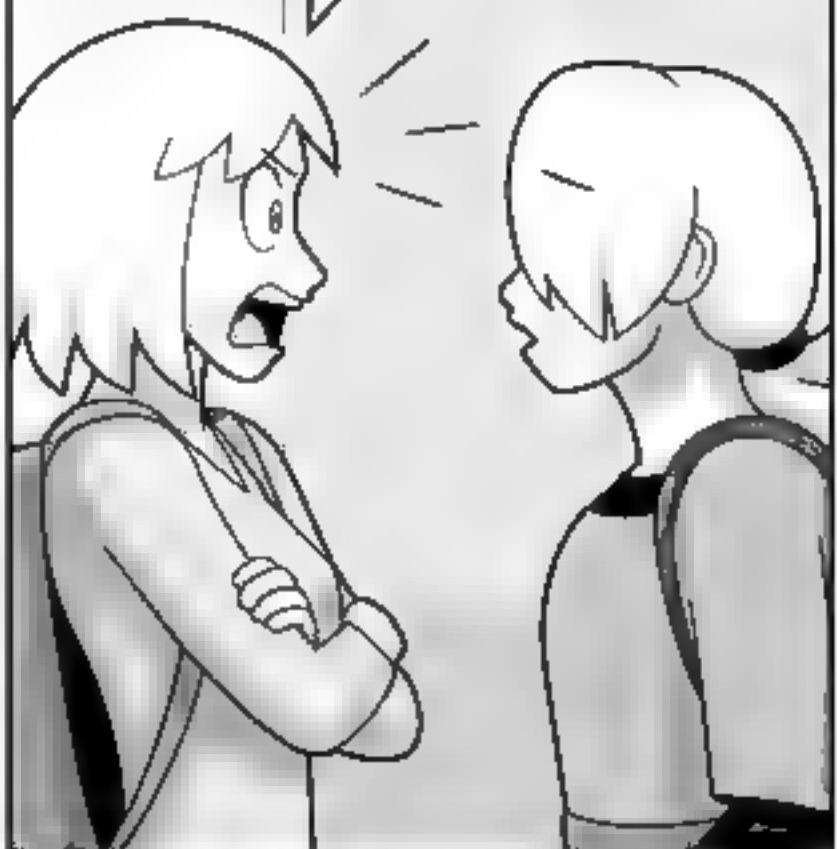
BECAUSE YOU'RE MY LITTLE  
BROTHER, AND I NEED TO  
MAKE SURE YOU'RE OKAY!

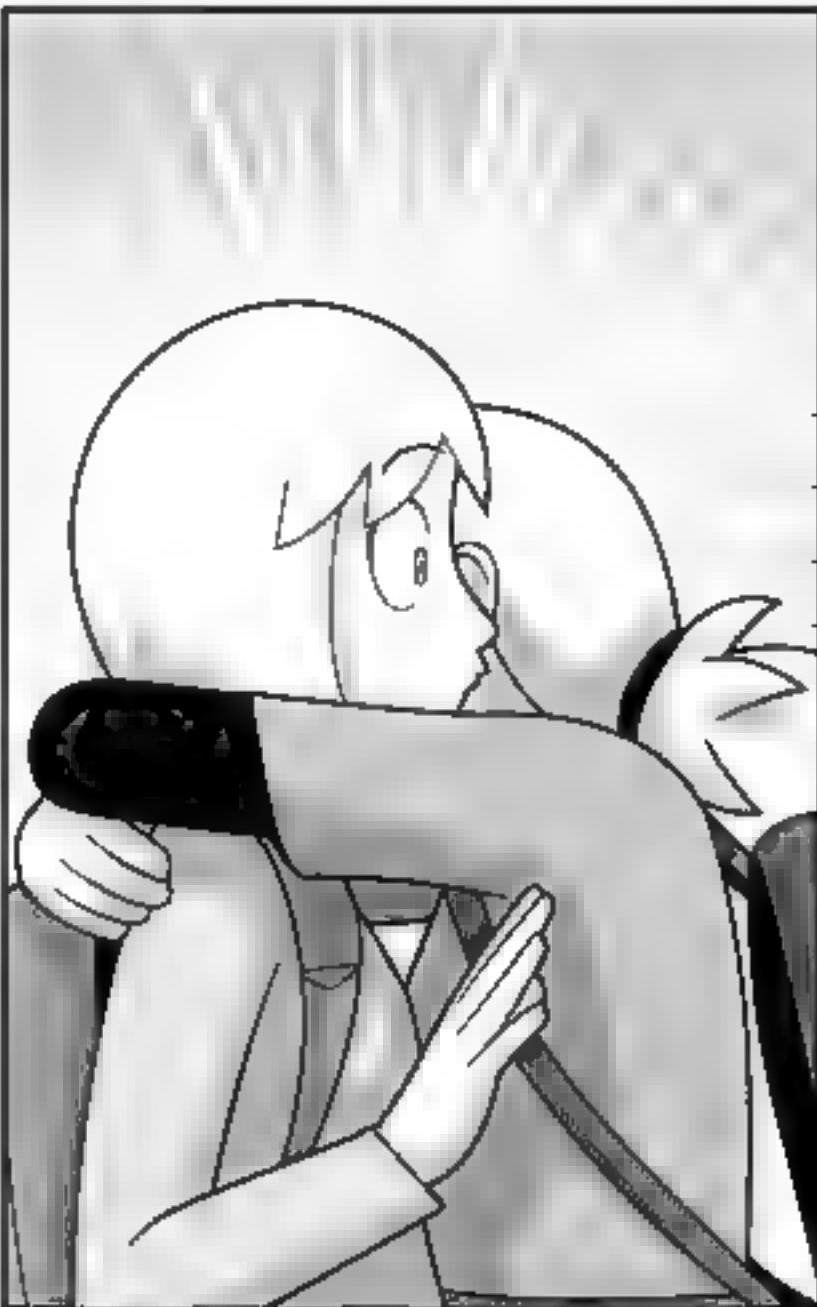
SHE... CARES  
ABOUT ME? O\_o

I... I CAN-  
NOT IMAGINE...

Y-YOU  
ARE MUCH  
O-OLDER.

TH-THAN...





**BRRHHH  
F-I-N-N-I-N-G!**



HE'S NOT A STRANGER.  
HE'S YOUR BROTHER.

WHO YOU JUST MET

AND MIGHT THINK OF  
YOU LIKE A MOM?



COME ON,  
YOU KNOW  
SOME THINGS  
ABOUT HIM.

LIKE...  
HE'S YOUR  
ADOPTED  
BROTHER!

AND HAS LONG HAIR!

AND... JUST A GUESS,  
BUT... NEURODIVERGENT?



AND A REALLY  
GOOD ATHLETE!  
I CAN'T BELIEVE  
HOW FAST HE...

RAN?



THE  
DISTANCE HE  
COVERED...

HOW  
DID I  
CATCH  
HIM?



WAS NOAH...  
HIGHLIGHTED?

I KNEW WHERE HE WAS  
EVEN AFTER HE TURNED  
CORNERS, AND...

THE  
HALLWAY...  
SPUN...?

NO, THAT WAS...  
WHEN I TURNED  
CORNERS, I...

DID...

DID I RUN ON  
THE WALL?!

HOW DID I

DIANE!

D-DON'T W...



I WAS FEELING  
LIGHTHEADED, AND

SOMEONE HELPED  
ME GET HERE...

I DON'T  
KNOW WHERE  
SHE WENT...

HM, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU  
SHOULD LIE DOWN.

NURSE

COME IN AND  
LET ME ASK YOU A  
FEW QUESTIONS,  
OKAY?

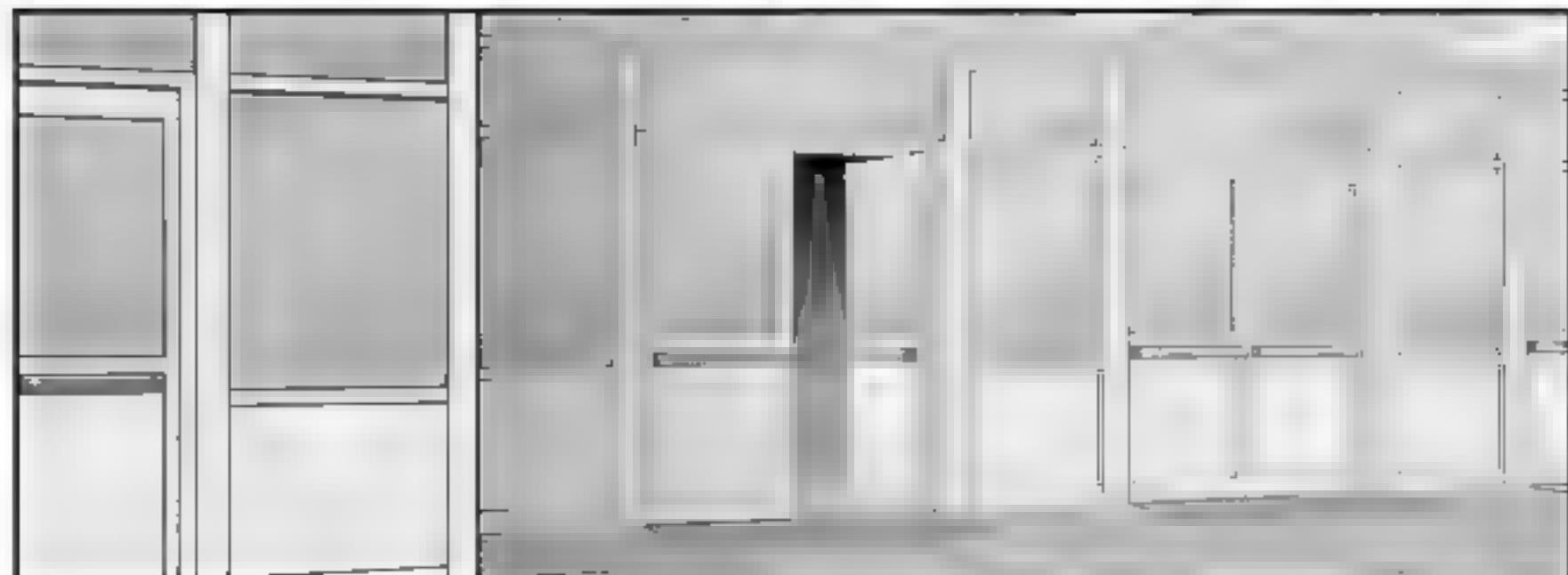
YEAH, SURE..

SHE'LL  
BE FINE

SHE'LL  
BE FINE

JUST GET  
OUT OF HERE

...



MUMBLE  
GRUMBLE

DIANE? ARE  
YOU OKAY?

GRACE?! HUH.  
I GUESS WE ARE  
FRIENDS NOW...

UH... SORT OF? I'M  
REALLY HAPPY WITH  
LUCY, BUT REALLY MAD  
AT THIS OTHER JERK.

WELL,  
JERKS.

SORTA IN A  
WEIRD PLACE.

SOME JERK WAS  
MEAN, AND LUCY  
STOOD UP FOR  
YOU, HUH?

UH...  
BASICALLY,  
YEAH.

I DON'T  
KNOW IF IT'LL  
MAKE YOU FEEL  
ANY BETTER...

BUT WHEN SOMEONE'S BEING A  
MEAN JERK, THEY'RE PROBABLY  
TRYING TO USE YOU TO DEAL  
WITH THEIR OWN ISSUES.

YAY?

WHAT I MEAN IS, THEY'RE  
PROBABLY OVERCOMPENSATING  
FOR THEIR OWN INSECURITIES  
AND PROBLEMS, AND UNFAIRLY  
TAKING THEM OUT ON YOU.

ANYTHING THEY  
SAID SAYS WAY  
MORE ABOUT THEM  
THAN YOU.

THAT... WOULD NORMALLY  
MAKE ME FEEL BETTER, YES.

"NORMALLY"?

DON'T WORRY  
ABOUT IT. THANK  
YOU, GRACE.

STRESS, AND LOW BLOOD SUGAR...

I DIDN'T SKIP BREAKFAST LIKE THE NURSE THINKS I DID, BUT I AM HUNGRIER THAN USUAL...

AS FOR STRESS...

• • YEAAHHH

I DEFINITELY DID SOMETHING WEIRD WHILE MAD ABOUT RAVEN.

I DON'T USUALLY GET THAT MAD, SO I PROBABLY WON'T DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT AGAIN...

BUT THEN AGAIN, I HAVE NO IDEA BECAUSE THE ONE PERSON I COULD ASK ABOUT BEING CLOSELY RELATED TO AN IMMORTAL IS OUT OF TOWN!

MAYBE NOAH HAS A WAY OF CONTACTING HIM?

I REALLY HOPE SO.

IF RAVEN LEFT TOWN WITHOUT LEAVING HIS SON A WAY TO CONTACT HIM, I'M GONNA GET MAD ENOUGH TO DO SOMETHING WEIRD AGAIN.

# Brother THE END

Story comics will return Weds, Dec 28

EGSNP as normal Thursday, then return Thurs, Dec 29

Moperville South, last year...



